L. Dostalek

D. L. Maddox

BLACK BARTLEMY'S TREASURE

By Jeffery Farnol

THE BROAD HIGHWAY

THE AMATEUR GENTLEMAN

THE HONOURABLE MR. TAWNISH

BELTANE THE SMITH

THE DEFINITE OBJECT

GREAT BRITAIN AT WAR

OUR ADMIRABLE BETTY

THE GESTE OF DUKE JOCELYN

BLACK BARTLEMY'S TREASURE

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BY

JEFFERY FARNOL

BOSTON
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY
1920

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Published November, 1920

THE UNIVERSITY PRESS, CAMBRIDGE, U. S. A.

To my Nephews

JAMES JEFFERY FARNOL

AND

RONALD EWART OAKESHOLT

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BLACK BARTLEMY'S TREASURE

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PROLOGUE

The Frenchman beside me had been dead since dawn. His scarred and shackled body swayed limply back and forth with every sweep of the great oar as we, his less fortunate bench-fellows, tugged and strained to keep time to the stroke.

Two men had I seen die beside me, yet Death ever passed me by; nay, it seemed rather that despite the pain of stripes, despite the travail and hardship, my strength waxed the mightier; upon arm and thigh, burnt nigh black by fierce suns, the muscles showed hard and knotted; within my body, scarred by the lash, the life leapt and glowed, yet was the soul of me sick unto death. But it seemed I could not die — finding thereby blessed rest and a surcease from this agony of life as had this Frenchman, who, of all the naked wretches about me, was the only one with whom I had any sort of fellowship. He had died (as I say) with the dawn, so quietly that at first I thought he but fainted and pitied him, but, when I knew, pity changed to bitterness.

Therefore, as I strove at the heavy oar, I prayed 'twixt gnashing teeth a prayer I had often prayed, and the matter of my praying was thus:

"Oh, God of Justice, for the agony I needs must now endure, for the bloody stripes and bitter anguish give to me vengeance — vengeance, O God, on mine enemy!"

So prayed I, hoarse-panting and with the sweat trickling down, whiles I stared at the naked back of him that rowed before me, — a great, fat fellow he had

been once, but now the skin hung in numberless creases whereon were many weals, some raw and bloody, that crossed and re-crossed each other after the manner of lace-work.

"Justice, O God, upon mine enemy! Since Death is not for me, let me live until I be avenged; for the pain I suffer so may I see him suffer; for the anguish that is mine so may I watch his agony. Thou art a just God, so, God of Justice, give to me vengeance!"

The sun rose high and higher over our quarter, beating down upon our naked backs and adding greatly to our torments thereby, waking the pain of old stripes and lending an added sting to new.

Ever and anon would come the sharp crack of the driver's whips, followed by the squealing cry of quivering flesh (a cry wherein was none of the human) the which, dying to a whine, was lost in the stir and bustle of the great galleass. But ever and always, beneath the hoarse voices of the mariners, beneath the clash of armour and tramp of feet, beneath the creak and rumble of the long oars, came yet another sound, rising and falling yet never ceasing, a dull, low sound the like of which you shall sometimes hear among trees when the wind is high,— the deep, sobbing moan that was the voice of our anguish as we poor wretches urged the great *Esmeralda* galleass upon her course.

The oar whereto I was chained along with my three bench-mates had at some time been badly sprung, so that the armourers had made shift to strengthen it with a stout iron fillet some six inches wide. Now it so happed that my grasp came upon this fillet and, with every stroke of the oar, day after day, week in and week out, it had become my wont to rub the links of my chain to and fro across this iron band, whereby they had become very smooth and shining.

The words of my prayer were yet upon my lips, when, chancing to look upon one of these links, I beheld that which set my heart a-leaping and my riotous blood a-tingle

to my fingers' ends; yet 't was a very small thing, no more than a mark that showed upon the polished surface of the link, a line not so thick as a hair and not to be noticed without close looking; but when I bore upon the link this hair-line grew and widened, it needed but a sudden wrench and I should be free. This threw me into such a rapturous transport that I had much ado to contain myself; howbeit after some while I lifted my eyes to the heaven all flushed and rosy with the young day, for it seemed that God had indeed heard my prayer.

Presently, along the gangway amidships, came none other than that accursed Portugal, Pedro the whip-master, who, espying the drooping form of the Frenchman beside me, forthwith fell a-cursing in his vile tongue and gave a prodigious flourish with his whip. Now by reason of much practice they do become very expert with these same whips, insomuch that they shall (with a certain cunning flick of the lash) gash you a man as it were with a knife, the like of which none may bear and not cry out for the exceeding pain of it. "Ha, thou lazy dog!" cried he. "Think ye to snore and take your ease whiles Pedro is aboard?" And with the word the long lash hissed and cracked upon the Frenchman's naked back like a pistol shot.

And lo! he (that meseemed was dead) stirred; I felt the scarred body leap and quiver, the swooning eyes opened, rolling dim and sightless, and the pallid face was twisted in sharp anguish; but, even as I watched, the lines of agony were smoothed away; into the wide eyes came a wondrous light, and, uttering a great, glad cry he sank forward across the oar-shaft and hung there. Hereupon this accursed Pedro betook him to his whip, smiting right heartily, but, seeing the Frenchman stirred not and perceiving, moreover, the blood to come but slow and in no great quantity, he presently desisted and bade us cease rowing one and all.

This sudden respite from labour served but to teach me how stiff and painful were my limbs, more especially my

left wrist and ankle, where the fetters had worn great sores.

The wind was fallen light, and there rose that hot, sickening reek, that suffocating stench that is like unto nothing on earth save one of these floating hells and the which, if a man hath but smelled it once, he shall nevermore forget.

After some while, back cometh Pedro with certain of the armourers, and (having by divers methods learned the Frenchman was in sooth dead) they struck off his fetters, hand and leg, in the doing of which they must needs free me also (since we were chained together, he and I) and, binding a great shot to his feet, made ready to heave him overboard.

And now, seeing no man heeded me, I snapped asunder the cracked link and was free save for the heavy chain that cumbered my leg. Stooping, I lifted this chain and crouched to spring for the bulwark; but now (even in this moment), remembering all that I had suffered at the hands of this most accursed Pedro, I turned, and wrapping the broken oar-chain about my fist, crept towards where he stood to oversee the armourers. His back was towards me, and I was within a yard of him when he turned, and, seeing me, uttered a shout and raised his whip, but ere the blow could fall I leapt and smote him. My iron-bound fist took him full betwixt the eyes, and looking down upon his crushed and spattered face as he lay, I knew that Pedro the whip-master would whip men no more these many days.

Then (not minded to die by the whip or upon a pike-head) turned I and sprang for the ship's side, but the chain about my leg hampered me sorely and ere I could mount the high bulwark I was beset from behind. So would I have faced them and died fighting, but fierce strokes battered me to my knees, fierce hands wrenched and tore at me, and, grown faint with blows, I was overborne, my hands lashed behind me, and thus helpless I was dragged along the gangway and so up the ladder to

the poop where, plain in all men's sight, a whipping-post had been set up. Yet even so I struggled still, panting out curses on them — French, and Spanish and English — drawing upon all the vile abuse of the rowing-bench and lazarette, since fain would I have them slay me out of hand the rather than endure the miseries and anguish of my lot. Yet this might not be (since slaves were hard to come by and I was mighty and strong), wherefore I struggled no more but suffered them to strike off my broken fetters and bind me to the whipping-post as they listed. Yet scarce had they made an end when there comes a loud hail from the masthead, whereupon was sudden mighty to-do of men running hither and yon, laughing and shouting one to another, some buckling on armour as they ran, some casting loose the great ordnance while eyes turned and hands pointed in the one direction; but turn and twist me how I might, I could see nought of any strange sail by reason of the high bulkhead beside me.

Of a sudden all voices were hushed as up the poop-ladder comes the commander Don Miguel in his black armour, who, looking long and steadily to windward, gives a sign with his guantleted hand, whereon divers of the officers go off hotfoot, some to muster the long files of *arquebusiers*, others to overlook the setting of more sail and the like. And now was a prodigious cracking of whips followed by groans and cries and screaming curses, and straightway the long oars began to swing with a swifter beat. From where I stood in my bonds I could look down upon the poor, naked wretches as they rose and fell, each and all at the same moment, in time to the stroke.

For maybe half an hour the chase was kept up and then all at once the decks quivered 'neath the discharge of one of the forward culverins; and presently, as the great galleass altered her course, obedient to the motion of Don Miguel's hand, I beheld, some half-league to windward, the towering stern of the ship we were pursuing,

whose length gradually grew upon me as we overhauled her until she was fairly in view. She was a small ship, and by her build I did not doubt but that she was English; even as I watched, up to her mizzen-peak fluttered the English flag. And hereupon a great yearning came upon me insomuch that of a sudden her high, weather-beaten sides, her towering masts and patched canvas grew all blurred and indistinct.

Thrice already our guns had roared, yet (though she was now so close that I made out her every rope and spar) she made no sign. In a little our guns fell silent also, wherefore, looking about, I beheld Don Miguel standing beside the tiller yet with his impassive gaze ever bent upon the foe; and, as I watched, I read his deadly purpose, and a great fear for the English ship came upon me and I fell a-praying beneath my breath, for we carried a weapon more terrible than any culverin that was ever cast, — the long, sharp ram below the water.

The English ship was now so near that I could see the yawning muzzles of her guns while her high, curving sides seemed to tower over us. As I gazed, with my heart full of a pitiful fear for her, I saw a head appear above her quarter-railing, a very round head whereon was a mariner's red cap. Came a puff of smoke, the sharp crack of a caliver and one of the officers beside Don Miguel threw up his hands and, twisting on his heels, fell clashing in his armour. When I looked again for the red cap, it was gone. But Don Miguel waited, silent and impassive as ever. Suddenly he gestured with his hand, I saw the heave of the steersmen's shoulders as they obeyed while the air rang with shouts of command as, the starboard oars holding water, the larboard thrashed and churned amain and the great *Esmeralda* galleass (turning thus well-nigh in her own length) drove straight for the side of her foe.

Never had I seen it better done and I set my teeth, waiting for the grinding crash that was to send the English ship to the bottom, but, lo! her creaking yards were

braced round, and, paying off before the wind (which now blew strong) she stood away upon a course at right angles to her old, whereby both vessels were running parallel as before. Yet it had been close, so very close indeed that as we drove past her I heard the sickening crack of our oars as they snapped off one after the other against her side, tossing those that manned them in bloody, struggling heaps.

And now from every English gun leaped roaring flame, the air was full of shrieks and groans and the crash of splintering wood and, through the eddying smoke, I could see many of our soldiery that lay in strange, contorted attitudes, while others crawled, sobbing, on hands and knees; but on the scarlet-dropping rowing-benches I dared not look.

Hotter waxed the fight, louder swelled the din and tumult with the never-ceasing thunder of the guns; and amid it all Don Miguel paced to and fro, impassive as always, the blade of his long rapier gleaming here and there as he directed the fire.

Up rolled the smoke thicker and denser but, ever and anon, through some rift I might catch a glimpse of the scarred, blackened side of the English ship, or the litter and confusion of our decks. Twice shots ploughed up the planking hard by me and once my post itself was struck so that for a moment I had some hope of winning free of my bonds, yet, struggle how I would, I could not move; the which filled me with a keen despair for I made no doubt (what with the smoke and tumult) I might have plunged overboard unnoticed and belike have gained the English ship.

Slowly and by degrees our fire slackened, one by one the guns fell silent and in their place rose the more hateful sounds of anguish. Now as I stood thus, my eyes smarting with burnt powder, my ears yet ringing with the din, I grew aware how the deck sloped in strange fashion; at first I paid small heed, yet with every minute this slope became steeper, and with this certainty came the knowl-

edge that we were sinking and moreover (judging by the angle of the deck) sinking by the stern.

Hereupon, impelled by that lust of life the which is implanted in each one of us, I fell to a wild struggling against my bonds, until, seeing in a little the hopelessness of this, I grew resigned to despair, and, ceasing my passionate efforts, looked about me, for the smoke was thinned away. And truly an evil sight was this great galleass, with its shot-torn decks and huddled heaps of dead, its litter of broken spars and dismantled guns, and with everywhere great gouts and pools of blood, while below and beyond were the shattered rowing-benches cumbered now with awful red heaps, silent for the most part, yet some there were who screamed high and shrill.

Save for myself and divers of the dead the poop lay deserted, but forward such of the soldiers and mariners who yet lived were fighting for the boats, and all was riot and confusion.

As I stared about me thus I espied Don Miguel lying among the wreckage of a dismantled gun; his face was toward me and looked as I had seen it an hundred times, save for a smear of blood upon his cheek. Even as I gazed his eyes met mine full and square. For a moment he lay without motion, then (his face a-twitch with the effort) he came slowly to his elbow, gazed about him and so back to me again. Then I saw his hand creep down to the dagger at his hip to fumble weakly there; howbeit, at the third essay he drew the blade and began to creep towards me. Very slowly and painfully he dragged himself along and once I heard him groan, but he stayed not till he was come within striking distance, yet was he sore wounded and so weak withal that he was fain to rest him awhile. And ever his impassive eyes looked up into mine the while I nerved myself to meet the blow unflinching (an it might be so). Once more he raised himself, his arm lifted slowly, the dagger gleamed and fell, its keen edge severing the cords that bound me, and with a sudden effort I broke free and stood staring down into those im-

passive eyes as one in a dream. Then, lifting a feeble hand, he pointed to the tattered sails of the English ship hard by, and so, resting his head upon his arm as one that is very weary, he sighed; and with the sigh I think the life passed out of him.

Turning, I was upon the quarter-railing in a single leap and, without a glance at the red havoc behind me, I plunged over and down.

The sharp sting of the brine struck me like a myriad needle points, but the sweet cool of the waters was wondrous grateful to my sun-scorched body as, coming to the surface, I struck out for the English ship though sore hampered by my chain.

Presently coming beneath her lofty stern, I found hanging therefrom a tangle of ropes and cordage whereby I contrived to clamber aboard and so beheld a man in a red seaman's bonnet who sat upon the wreckage of one of the quarter guns, tying up a splinter-gash in his arm with hand and teeth; perceiving me, he rolled a pair of blue eyes up at me and nodded.

"Welcome aboard, lad!" said he, having knotted the bandage to his liking. "Be ye one as can understand good English?"

"Aye!" said I, nodding.

"Why, then, bear witness as I be a patient soul and marciful, marciful. Be witness as I held my fire so long as any marciful soul might by token that I knew what a broadside can do among crowded rowing-benches — having rowed aboard one o' they Spanish hells afore now — so I held my fire till yon devil's craft came nigh cutting me asunder — and marcy hath its limits. Timothy Spence o' *The Tiger*, master, is me, homeward bound for the Port o' London, and by this fight am short five good men. But you're a proper big un. Go for'ard to the bo'sun; you shall know him by reason that he lacketh his starboard yere. Ask him for clothes to cover thy nakedness lad, and — oho, there goeth yon devil's craft — !" Turning as he spoke, I saw the sharp bows of the *Esmeralda* lift

and lift, high and higher and, with a long-drawn gurgling roar, the great galleass plunged down stern foremost, burying her shame and misery from the eyes of man for evermore.

Thus then I sailed with Master Timothy Spence aboard *The Tiger*, a free man after five years of anguish.

CHAPTER I

Of What Befell on Pembury Hill

It was a night of tempest with rain and wind, a great wild wind that shouted mightily near and far, filling the world with halloo; while, ever and anon, thunder crashed and lightning flamed athwart the muddy road that wound steeply up betwixt grassy banks topped by swaying trees. Broken twigs, whirling down the wind, smote me in the dark; fallen branches reached out arms that grappled me unseen, but I held on steadfastly, since every stride carried me nearer to vengeance, that vengeance for the which I had prayed and lived. So with bared head lifted, exulting to the tempest and grasping the stout hedge-stake that served me for staff, I climbed the long ascent of Pembury Hill.

Reaching the summit at last, I must needs stay awhile to catch my breath and shelter me as well as I might 'neath the weather bank, for upon this eminence the rain lashed, and the wind smote me with a fury redoubled.

And now, as I stood amid that howling darkness, my back propped by the bank, my face lifted to the tempest, I was aware of a strange sound, very shrill and fitful, that reached me 'twixt the booming wind-gusts, a sound that came and went, now loud and clear, anon faint and remote, and I wondered what it might be. Then the rushing dark was split asunder by a jagged lightning flash, and I saw. Stark against the glare rose black shaft and crossbeam, wherefrom swung a creaking shape of rusty chains and iron bands that held together something shrivelled and black and wet with rain, a grisly thing that leapt on the buffeting wind, that strove and jerked as it would fain break free and hurl itself down upon me.

Now hearkening to the dismal creak of this chained thing, I fell to meditation. This awful shape (thought I) had been a man once, hale and strong — even as I — but this man had contravened the law (even as I proposed to do) and he had died a rogue's death and so hung, rotting, in his chains, even as this my own body might do some day. And, hearkening to the shrill wail of his fetters, my flesh crept with loathing, and I shivered. But the fit passed, and in my vain pride I smote my staff into the mud at my feet and vowed within myself that nought should balk me of my just vengeance, come what might; as my father had suffered death untimely and hard, so should die the enemy of my race; for the anguish he had made me endure so should he know anguish. I bethought me how long and deadly had been this feud of ours, handed down from one generation to another, a dark, blood-smirched record of bitter wrongs bitterly avenged. "To hate like a Brandon and revenge like a Conisby!" This had been a saying in our south country upon a time; and now — he was the last of his race as I was the last of mine, and I had come back out of hell that this saying might be fulfilled. Soon — ha, yes, in a few short hours — the feud should be ended once and for all, and the house of Conisby avenged to the uttermost. Thinking thus, I heeded no more the raving tempest around me until, roused by the plunge and rattle of the gibbet chains, I raised my head and, shaking my staff up at that black and shrivelled thing, I laughed loud and fierce and, even as I did so, there leapt a great blaze of crackling flame and thereafter a thunderclap that seemed to shake the very earth and smite the roaring wind to awed silence; and in this silence I heard a whisper:

"Oh, mercy of God!"

Somewhere in the darkness hard by a woman had cried. Instinctively I turned thitherward, searching the night vainly until the lightning flared again, and I beheld a cloaked and hooded figure huddled miserably against the bank of the road and, as darkness came, I spoke:

"Woman, doth the gibbet fright you, or is 't I? If 't is the gibbet, go hence; if 't is I, rest assured."

"Who are you?" said a breathless voice.

"One of no more account than the poor thing that danceth aloft in his chains and for you as harmless."

And now she was beside me, a dark, wind-blown shape, and above the howling tempest her voice reached me in passionate pleading:

"Sir — sir — will you aid one in sore danger and distress?"

"Yourself?" I questioned.

"Nay — indeed, nay," she panted; "'t is Marjorie, my poor, poor brave Marjorie. They stopped my coach — drunken men. I know not what 'came of Gregory, and I leapt out and escaped them in the dark; but Marjorie — They carried her off — there is a light down the lane yonder. I followed and saw — Oh, sir, you will save Marjorie — You are a man —"

A hand was upon my ragged sleeve, a hand that gripped and shook at me in desperate supplication. "You will save her from — from worse than death? Speak — Speak!"

"Lead on!" quoth I, answering this compelling voice. The gripping fingers slipped down and clasped my hand in the dark, and with never another word she led me away unseeing and unseen until we came where we were more sheltered from rain and wind; and now I took occasion to notice that the hand that gripped mine so masterfully was small and soft, so that what with this and her voice and speech I judged her one of condition. But my curiosity went no further nor did I question her, for in my world was no place for women. So she led me on at haste despite the dark — like one that was sure of her whereabouts — until I suddenly espied a dim light that shone out from the open lattice of what I judged to be a small hedge-tavern. Here my companion halted suddenly and pointed to the light:

"Go!" she whispered. "Go — nay, first take this!"

and she thrust a small pistol into my hand. "Haste!" she panted. "Oh, haste — and I do pray God shield and bless you." Then with never a word I left her and strode towards the beam of light.

Being come nigh the casement, I paused to cock the weapon and to glance at the priming, then, creeping to the open lattice, I looked into the room.

Three men scowled at each other across a table, — desperate-looking fellows, scarred and ill-featured, with clothes that smacked of the sea; behind them in a corner crouched a maid, comely of seeming but pallid of cheek and with cloak torn by rough hands and, as she crouched, her wide eyes stared at the dicebox that one of the men was shaking vigorously, — a tall, hairy fellow this, with great rings in his ears; thus stood he rattling the dice and smiling while his companions cursed him hoarsely.

With a twist of the hand the hairy man made his throw, and as the three evil heads stooped above the dice, I clambered through the window, levelled pistol in one hand, heavy staff in the other.

"What d' ye set?" quoth I. The three sprang apart and stared at me, quite chapfallen.

"What 's to do?" growled one.

"First your barking irons — lay them here on the table and quick 's the word!" One after another they drew the weapons from their belts, and one by one I tossed them through the window.

"What!" quoth one, a lank rogue with a patch over one eye and winking the other jovial-wise, "how now, mate o' mine; shall dog bite dog then?"

"Aye," says I, "and with a will!"

"Nay, nay, shipmate," quoth another, a plump, small man with round bright eyes and but one ear, "easy now — easy. We be three lorn mariners, d' ye see — jolly dogs, bully boys, shipmate — a little fun wi' a pretty lass — nought to harm, d' ye see, sink me! Join us and welcome, says I, share and share alike — O!"

"Aye, I 'll join you," quoth I, "but first — you wi'

the rings — open the door!" Here the hairy fellow growled an oath and reached for an empty tankard and thereupon got the end of my staff driven shrewdly into his midriff so that he sank to the floor and lay gasping.

"Nay now, shipmate," quoth the plump man in wheedling tone, but with round eyes snapping, "here 's lubberly manners, sink and scuttle me — "

"Open the door!" says I.

"Heartily — heartily!" says he, his eye upon my cudgel and, edging to the door, drew the bolts and set it wide.

"Woman," quoth I, "run!"

With never a word the maid sprang erect, caught her torn cloak about her and, speeding across the room, was gone; whereon the lank fellow sat him down and fell a-cursing viciously in Spanish and English, the plump man clicked his teeth and grinned, while "Rings," leaning against the wall, clasped his belly and groaned.

"Well, so, my bully roarer, and what now?" demanded the plump man softly.

"Why, now," says I, "'t was share and share alike, I mind — "

"Aye, but she 's off, slipped her moorings, d' ye see, my good lad, and be damned t' ye wi' all my heart," said the little plump man, smiling, but with the devil peeping through his narrow lids.

"Look 'ee," says I, laying a groat upon the table, "there 's my all — come turn out your pockets — "

"Pockets!" murmured the plump man. "Lord love me, what 's this? Here 's us cheated of a bit o' daintiness, here 's Abner wi' all the wind knocked out o' him, and now here 's you for thieving and robbing three poor lorn sailormen as never raised hand agin ye — shame, shipmate — "

"'Od rot your bones!" snarled the one-eyed man and spat towards me, whereat I raised my staff and he, lifting an arm, took the blow on his elbow joint and writhed, cursing; but while I laughed at the fellow's contortions, the plump man sprang (marvellous nimble) and dashed

out the light and, as I stepped from before the window, I heard the lattice go with a crash of glass. Followed a long, tense moment wherein we all (as I judge) held our breath, for though the storm yet roared beyond the shattered casement, within was a comparative quiet. Thus, as I stood in the dark listening for some rustle, some stealthy creeping step to guide my next blow, I thrust away my pistol and, changing my staff to my right hand, drew forth the broad-bladed sailor's knife I carried and so waited mighty eager and alert, but heard only the far-off booming of the wind. Then a floor-board creaked faintly to my left and, turning short, I whirled my staff, felt it strike home and heard a fierce cry and the uneven tread of staggering feet.

"Fight, rogues!" cried I. "Here's meat and drink to me — fight!" and setting my back to the wall I waited for their rush. Instead I heard a hoarse whispering, lost all at once in a woman's shrill scream out beyond the casement, and thereafter a loud voice that hailed:

"House ho! House ahoy! Light ho! Show a glim, ye drunken dogs!" and here followed a rush of roaring sea-oaths, drowned in a scream louder, wilder than before. Then, while this distressful cry yet thrilled upon the air, pandemonium broke loose about me, shouts, cries and a rush and trample of feet; the table went over with a crash, and the darkness about me rained blows. But as they struck at random and fierce, so struck I and (as I do think) made right goodly play with my hedge-stake until, caught by a chance blow, I staggered, tripped and, falling headlong, found myself rolling upon sodden grass outside the shattered window. For a moment I lay half-dazed and found in the wind and rain vasty comfort and refreshment.

Then in the pitchy gloom hard by I heard that which brought me to my feet — an evil scuffling, a close and desperate struggling — a man's hoarse laugh and a woman's pitiful pleading and sobbing. I had lost my staff, but I yet grasped my knife and with this held point upwards

and my left hand outstretched before me, I crept forward guided by these sounds. My fingers came upon hair, a woman's long, soft tresses, and I remember marvelling at the silky feel of them. From these my hand slipped to her waist and found there an arm that grasped her close, then, drawing back my hand, I smote with my knife well beneath this arm and drove in the stout blade twice. The fellow grunted and, loosing the maid, leapt full at me, but I met him with clenched fist, and he went down headlong and I, crouched above him and feeling him struggle to his knees, kicked him back into the mud and thereafter leapt on him with both feet as I had been wont to do when fighting my fellow-slaves in some lazarette. Then, seeing he stirred no more, I left him, doubting nothing I had done his business. Yet as I went I felt myself shiver, for though I had been compelled to fight the naked wretches who had been my fellow-slaves I had killed no man as yet.

Thus as I went, chancing to stumble against a tree, I leaned there a while; and now, remembering those two blows under the arm-pit, what with this stabbing and my fall and lack of food, for I had eaten but once that day, I grew faint and sick. But as I leaned there, out of the gloom came a hand that fumbled timidly at my bowed head, my arm, my hand.

"Sir — are you hurt?" questioned a voice, and here once again I was struck by the strange, vital quality of this voice, its bell-like depth and sweetness.

"No whit!" said I. Now as I spoke it chanced she touched the knife in my grasp and I felt her shiver a little.

"Did you — oh, sir — did you — kill him?"

"And wherefore no?" I questioned. "And why call me 'sir'?"

"You do speak as one of gentle birth."

"And go like the beggar I am — in rags. I am no 'sir.'"

"How may I call you?"

"Call me rogue, thief, murderer — what ye will, 't is all one. But as for you," quoth I, lifting my head, "'t is time you were gone — see yonder!" and I pointed where a light winked through the trees, a light that danced to and fro, coming slowly nearer until it stopped all at once, then rose a shout answered by other shouts, and a roar of dismayed blasphemy. At this my companion pressed nearer, so that I felt her shiver again.

"Let us be gone!" she whispered. "Marjorie, come, child, let us haste." So we went on together at speed, and ever as we went that small soft hand was upon the hand that held the knife. So we sped on through the dark, these two maids and I, unseeing and unseen, speaking little by reason of our haste.

Presently the rain ceased, the wind abated its rage, and the thunder pealed faint with distance, while ever and anon the gloom gave place to a vague light, where, beyond the flying cloud-wrack, a faint moon peeped.

Guided by that slender hand, so soft and yet instinct with warm and vigorous life, I stumbled on through leafy ways, traversed a little wood, on and ever on until, the trees thinning, showed beyond a glimmer of the great high road. Here I stayed.

"Madam," said I, making some ado over the unfamiliar word, "you should be safe now — and, as I do think, your road lieth yonder."

"Pembury is but a mile hence," said she, "and there we may get horses. Come, at least this night you shall find comfort and shelter."

"No," said I. "No — I am a thing of the roads and well enough in hedge or rick!" and I would have turned, but her hand upon my sleeve restrained me.

"Sir," said she, "be you what you will, you are a man! Who you are I know and care not — but you have this night wrought that I shall nevermore forget and now I — we — would fain express our gratitude — "

"Indeed and indeed!" said the maid Marjorie, speaking for the first time.

"I want no gratitude!" growled I, mighty gruff.

"Yet shall it follow thee, for the passion of gratitude is strong and may not be denied — even by beggar so proud and arrogant!" And now, hearkening to this voice, so deep and soft and strangely sweet, I knew not if she laughed at me or no; but even as I debated this within myself, she lifted my hand, the hand that grasped my knife, and I felt the close, firm pressure of two warm, soft lips; then she had freed me, and I fell back a step, striving for speech yet finding none.

"God love me!" quoth I at last. "Why must you — do so!"

"And wherefore not?" she questioned proudly.

"'T is the hand of a vagrant, an outcast, a poor creeper o' ditches!" says I.

"But a man's hand!" she answered.

"'T is a hand that hath slain once this night and shall slay again ere many hours be sped." Now here I heard her sigh as one that is troubled.

"And yet," said she gently, "'t is no murderer's hand, and you that are vagrant and outcast are no rogue."

"How judge ye this, having never seen me?" I questioned.

"In that I am a woman. For God hath armed our weakness with a gift of knowledge whereby we may oft-times know truth from falsehood, the noble from the base, 'spite of all their outward seeming. So do I judge you no rogue — a strong man but very — aye, very young that, belike, hath suffered unjustly and being so young art fierce and impatient of all things and apt to rail bitterly 'gainst the world. Is 't not so?"

"Aye," said I, marvelling, "truly 't is like witch-craft — mayhap you will speak me my name." At this she laughed (most wonderful to hear) and vastly so to such coarse rogue as I whose ears had long been strangers to aught but sounds of evil and foul obscenity.

"Nay," says she, "my knowledge of you goeth no further — but —" (and here she paused to fetch a shud-

dering breath) "but for him you killed — that two-legged beast! You did but what I would have done for — oh, man, had you not come, I — I should have killed him, maid though I am! See, here is the dagger I snatched from his girdle as he strove with me. Oh, take it — take it!" And, with a passionate gesture, she thrust the weapon into my grasp.

"Oh, madam — my lady!" cried her companion. "Look, yonder be lights — lanthorns aflare on the road. 'T is Gregory as I do think, with folk come to seek for us. Shall we go meet them?"

"Nay, wait, child — first let us be sure!" So, side by side, we stood all three amid the dripping trees, watching the tossing lights that grew ever nearer until we might hear the voices of those that bare them raised, ever and anon, in confused shouting.

"Aye, 't is Gregory!" sighed my lady after some while. "He hath raised the village, and we are safe — "

"Hark!" cried I, starting forward. "What name do they cry upon?"

"Mine, sir!"

"Oho, my lady!" roared the hoarse chorus. "Oho, my Lady Joan — my Lady Brandon — Brandon — Brandon!"

"Brandon!" cried I, choking upon the word.

"Indeed, sir — I am the Lady Joan Brandon of Shene Manor, and so long as life be mine needs must I bear within my grateful heart the memory of —"

But, waiting for no more, I turned and sprang away into the denser gloom of the wood. And ever as I went, crashing and stumbling through the underbrush, above the noise of my headlong flight rang the hated name of the enemy I had journeyed so far to kill — "Brandon! Brandon! Brandon!"

CHAPTER II

How I Heard a Song in a Wood at Midnight

Headlong went I, staying for nought and heedless of all direction, but presently, being weary and short of breath, I halted, and leaning against a tree stood thus very full of bitter thought. The storm was quite passed, but a chill wind was abroad that moaned dismally, while all about me sodden trees dripped with mournful, sobbing noises. And hearkening to all this, what should I be thinking but of the sweet, soft tones of a woman's voice that had stirred within me memories of better days, a voice that had set me to dreams of the future, to fond and foolish imaginings. For, though shamed and brutalised by my sufferings, I was a man and in this past hour (strange though it do seem) felt scorn of myself and a yearning for higher things and all this by no greater reason than the sound of a woman's voice in the dark and the touch of her warm lips on my hand — and she a Brandon! And now, as the bitter mockery of it all rushed upon me, fierce anger swept me, and I broke forth into vile oaths and cursings — English and Spanish, foul invectives picked up from the rogues, my fellows in misery; and feeling a new shame therefore did but curse the more. So there crouched I 'gainst the tree, shivering like the miserable wretch I was and consumed with a ravening hunger. At last, becoming aware that I yet grasped a weapon in either hand, I thrust my knife in my girdle and fell to handling this other, judging it by touch since it was yet too dark for eyes to serve me. And by its feel I knew it for no honest knife; here was a thing wrought by foreign hands, a haft cunningly shaped and wrought, a blade curiously slender and long and three-edged, a very deadly thing I judged by the feel.

Now since it had no sheath (and it so sharp) I twisted my neckerchief about it from pommel to needle-point and, thrusting it into the leathern wallet at my belt, went on some way farther 'mid the trees, seeking some place where I might be sheltered from the cold wind. Then, all at once, I heard that which brought me to a stand.

A man was singing and at no great distance,—a strange, merry air and stranger words; and the voice was loud, yet tuneful and mellow, and the words (the which I came to know all too well) were these:

"Cheerly O and cheerly O,
Right cheerly I 'll sing O.
Whiles at the mainyard to and fro
We watch a dead man swing O.
With a rumbelow and to and fro
He by the neck doth swing O!

"One by the knife did part wi' life
And three the bullet took O.
But three times three died plaguily
A-wriggling on a hook O.
A hook both strong and bright and long
They died by gash o' hook O.

"So cheerly O and cheerly O
Come shake a leg, lads all O,
Wi' a yo-ho-ho and a rumbelow
And main-haul, shipmates, haul O.

"Some swam in rum to Kingdom come
Full many a lusty fellow.
And since they 're dead I 'll lay my head
They 're flaming now in hell O.

"So cheerly O, so cheerly O—"

Waiting for no more of the vile rant I strode forward and thus presently came on a small dell or dingle full of the light of a fire that crackled right merrily; at the which

most welcome sight I made shift to scramble down the steepy bank forthright and approached the blaze on eager feet. Drawing near, I saw the fire burned within a small cave beneath the bank, and as I came within its radiance the song broke off suddenly, and a man rose up, facing me across the fire and with one hand hid under the flap of his side pocket.

"Fibs off your popps, cull!" quoth I in the vernacular of the roads. "Here's none but a pal as lacketh warmth and a bite."

"Aha!" quoth the fellow, peering across the blaze. "And who be you? Stand and give a show o' your figure-head!" Obediently I stood with hands outspread to the flame, warming my shivering body at its grateful heat.

"Well?" said I.

"Why," quoth he, nodding. "You're big enough and wild enough and as likely a cutthroat as another; what's the lay?"

"The high pad!" said I.

"Where away?"

"'T is no matter!"

"All I ask is," quoth the fellow with a quizzical look, "how you've fobbed the nubbing cheat so long!"

"And what I ask is," quoth I, "how a sailorman comes to know the patter o' the flash coves!"

"'T is no matter," said he, "but since you're o' the Brotherhood, sit ye and welcome; 't is dry enough here in this cave."

Staying for no second bidding, I entered the little cave and sat me down in the comforting warmth of the fire. The man was a comely fellow of a hectoring, swashing air, bright of eye and instant of gesture; close to hand lay a short cutting-sword, pistols bulged his deep coat pockets while betwixt his knees was a battered case bottle.

"Well," said he, eyeing me over, "what's the word?"

"Food!" said I.

"Nary a bite!" he answered, shaking his head. "But

here's rum now if you've a mind to sluice the ivories — ha?"

"Not a drop!"

"Good! The more for me!" he nodded. "Rum — ha —

"Some swam in rum to Kingdom come — "

"You sing a mighty strange song!" quoth I.

"Ha — d' ye like it?"

"No, I don't!"

"And wherefore no?"

"There seems overmuch death in it."

"Death?" cried he with a great laugh and hugging his case bottle. "Death, says you — aye, aye, says I, and so there is, death in every line on 't. 'T is song as was made for dead men, of dead men, by a dead man, and there 's for ye now!" Here he lifted the bottle, drank and thereafter smacked his lips with great gusto. "Made by a dead man," he repeated, "for dead men, of dead men, and there 's for ye!"

"I like your song less and less!"

"You've a cursed queasy stomach, I think!" he hiccuped.

"And an empty one!" said I.

"'T is a song well bethought on by — by better men nor you, for all your size!" said he, glancing at me over his bottle with a truculent eye, and though his glance was steady, I perceived the drink was affecting him more and more. "Aye, many a better man!" he nodded, frowning.

"As who?" I questioned.

"First, there 's Abnegation Mings, as you shall hear tell of on the Main from Panama to St. Catherine's; aye, by the horns of Nick, there be none of all the coastwise Brotherhood quicker or readier when there 's aught i' the wind than Abnegation, and you can lay to that, my delicate cove!"

"And who 's he?"

"Myself!" Here he took another draught and nodded

at me in drunken solemnity. "And look 'ee, my dainty cull, when you 've seen as much o' death as Abnegation Mings, you 'll know as death 's none so bad a thing, so long as it leaves you alone. And I for one say 't is a good song, and there 's for ye!"

"And who else?"

"Well, there 's Montbars as they do call the Exterminator, and there 's young Harry Morgan — a likely lad — and there 's Roger Tressady and Sol Aiken and Penfeather — sink him!"

"And Abner!" said I at a venture.

"Aye, for sure!" he nodded; and then, "Ha, d' ye know Abner, then?"

"I 've met him."

"Where away?"

"In a tavern some miles hence."

"A tavern!" quoth he. "A tavern, 'od rot 'em, and here 's me hove short in this plaguy hole! A tavern, and here 's my bottle out — dog bite me! But a mouthful left — well, here 's to a bloody shirt and the Brotherhood o' the Coast."

"You drink to the buccaneers, I think?" said I.

"And what if I do?"

"'T is said they be no better than pirates — "

"Would ye call me a pirate, then?" cried he, scowling and ugly.

"I would." Quick as flash he clapped hand to pocket, but the pistol caught on the lining, and before he could free it, I had covered him with mine, whereat he grew suddenly rigid and still. "Up wi' your fambles!" ordered I. Obediently he raised his hands and, taking his pistols, I opened the pan of each one and having blown out the primings, tossed them back.

"Snake sting me!" said he, laughing ruefully as he repocketed his weapons. "This comes o' harbouring a lousy rogue as balks good liquor. The man as won't take good rum hath the head of a chicken, the heart of a yellow dog and the bowels of a w-worm and bone-rot him, says I.

Lord love me, but I've seen many a better throat than yours slit ere now, my buxom lad!"

"And aided too, belike?" said I.

"Why, here's a leading question — but mum! Here's a hand that knoweth not what doth its fellow — mum, boy, mum!" And tilting back his head he brake forth anew into his villainous song:

"Two on a knife did end their life
And three the bullet took O.
But three times three died plaguily
A-wriggling on a hook O.
Sing cheerly O and cheerly O,
They died by gash o' hook O."

"And look'ee, my ben cull, if I was to offer ye all Bartlemy's treasure — which I can't, mark me — still you'd never gather just what manner o' hook that was. Anan says you — mum, boy, says I. Howbeit, I say, 't is a good song," quoth he, blinking drowsily at the fire; "here's battle in 't, murder and sudden death and wha' — what more could ye expect of any song — aye, and there's women in 't too!" Here he fell to singing certain lewd ribaldry that I will not here set down, until what with the rum and the drowsy heat of the fire that I had replenished, he yawned, stretched and laying himself down, very soon fell a-snoring to my no small comfort.

As for me, I sat there waiting for the dayspring; the fire sank lower and lower, filling the little cave with a rosy glow which fell athwart the sprawling form of the sleeper and made his red face seem purplish and suffused, like the face of one I had once seen dead of strangulation: howbeit, he slept well enough, judging from his lusty snoring. Now presently in the surrounding dark beyond the smouldering fire was a glimmer, a vague blur of sloping, trampled bank backed by misty trees; so came the dawn, very chill and full of eddying mists that crawled phantom-like, filling the little dingle brimful and blotting out the surrounding trees. In a little I arose and, coming without

the cave, shivered in the colder air, shaken with raging hunger. And now, remembering my utter destitution, I stooped to peer down at the sleeper, half minded to go through his pockets, but in a while I turned away and left him sprawled in his sottish slumber.

CHAPTER III

Tells How I Stole My Breakfast

The mist lay very thick all about me but, when I had climbed to higher ground, it thinned away somewhat, so that as the pallid light grew I began to see something of the havoc wrought by the storm; here and there lay trees uprooted, while everywhere was a tangle of broken boughs and trailing branches, insomuch that I found my going no small labour. But presently, as I forced a way through these leafy tangles, the birds, awaking, began to fill the dim world with blithe chirpings that grew and grew to a sweet clamour, ever swelling until the dark woods thrilled with gladsome music; and I, beholding the first beam of sun, felt heartened thereby 'spite my lack of sleep and the gnawing of hunger's sharp fangs and hasted with blither steps. Thus in a while I brake forth of the desolate trees and came out upon a fair, rolling meadow with blooming hedgerows before me and, beyond, the high road. And now, as I stayed to get my bearings, up rose the sun in majesty, all glorious in purple and pink and gold, whose level beams turned the world around me into a fair garden all sweet and fresh and green while, in the scowling woods behind, the sullen mists crept furtive away till they were vanished quite and those leafy solitudes became a very glory.

But my hunger was very sore, a need I purposed to satisfy soon and at all hazards, therefore, having marked my direction, I went at speed and, crossing the meadow, came into the highway and struck south. On my going through the woods I had chosen me a cudgel in place of the one lost, shortish and knotted and very apt for quick wrist-play, and I plucked forth my sailor's knife, meaning to trim my staff therewith; but with it poised in my hand,

I stopped all at once, for I saw that the point of the stout blade (the which I had sharpened and whetted to an extreme keenness), I perceived, I say, that the blade was bent somewhat and the point turned, hook-like. Now as I strode on again, the early sun flashing back from the steel, I fell to wondering how this had chanced and, bethinking me of those two deadly blows I had struck in the dark, I scrutinised my knife, blade and haft, yet found nowhere on it any trace of blood, so that 't was manifest the fellow had worn some protection, — chain shirts were common enough, and many a rogue went with a steel skull to line his hat. So it seemed the fellow lived yet and (black rogue though he was) I was vaguely glad 't was not my hand had sent him to his account.

I was yet revolving the matter in my mind when I heard a loud and merry whistling and, glancing up, beheld a country fellow approaching down a side lane. He wore a wide-eaved hat, and his smock was new-washed and speckless; but that which drew and held my eyes, that which brought me to a sudden stand, was the bundle he bore wrapped in a fair, white clout. So, with my gaze on this, I stood leaning on my knotted, untrimmed staff, waiting him. Suddenly, chancing to turn his head, he espied me, halted in his stride, then eyeing me askance, advanced again. A small man he was, with rosy face, little, merry eyes, and a wide, up-curving mouth.

"Goo' marnin' to 'ee — it do ha' been a tur'ble bad starm las' night, master!"

"Aye!" said I, and my heart warmed to him by reason of his good Kentish tongue, the like of which I had not heard these many weary years; but at sight of that white-clouted bundle my mouth watered and hunger gnawed with sharper tooth. "What have ye here?" I questioned, touching this with my staff.

"Nou't but my dinner, master, 's ever was!"

"Nay," said I, scowling, "I think not!"

"Aye, but it be, master!" he nodded. "Bread and beef wi' a mossel o' cheese like, 's ever was!"

"Bread! Beef! Cheese! Liar — here is no dinner o' yours!"

"Aye, master, but it do be so, sure!" quoth he, staring. "My very own dinner cut by my very own darter, beef an' bread an' a mossel o' cheese — I take my Bible oath t' it, I do — bread an' beef an' a mossel — "

"Show me!"

With notable haste he undid the wrapping, discovering a good half-loaf, a thick slice of roast beef and a slab of yellow cheese.

"Ha, man!" quoth I 'twixt shut teeth. "So you lied to me, then."

"Lied to 'ee, master?" said he faintly.

"You told me 't was your dinner!"

"Aye, and so it be, so it be, I lay my oath — beef, d' ye see an' a mossel — "

"Nay," said I, gathering up the viands, "here 's my breakfast."

"Is it?" said he, gaping.

"It is! Would ye deny it?"

"Not for a moment!" said he, eyeing my staff and the gleaming knife in my belt. "Lordy, no! Only how was I to know 't were yourn, master — when my darter cut it for her very own feyther — "

"We live and we learn!" said I, turning away. "What might your name be?"

"Full-o'-j'y Tucker, master."

"Why then, Full-of-joy, though my gain be your loss, take comfort in that 't is more blessed to give than receive. Moreover, though you lack a dinner, you have a daughter. Methinks of the two of us you have the better of life — "

"Why, look 'ee now, master," said he, scratching his shaven chin, "since you 've got your breakfus' surely, if you 're minded t' step along t' my cottage down t' lane, I can give ye a jug o' good ale t' wash it down — " Now as he spoke thus, seeing the sturdy manliness of him, I dropped my staff and reached out my hand.

"Full-of-joy," said I, "a starving man must eat by hook or crook, but if you 'll give your honest hand to a thief — there 's mine!"

The man stared from my hand to my face, his wide mouth curved, then, rubbing hand on snowy smock, he grasped my fingers and wrung them heartily, — a clean and honest grip such as I had not known for many a long day.

"Will 'ee come, master?" he questioned. I shook my head. Quoth I:

"You have a daughter, and I 'm no fit company for a good, sweet maid — nor ever shall be for that matter!" So saying, I dropped his hand and, turning, strode away down the road, his dinner beneath my arm; and when at last I glanced back I saw him standing where I had left him, staring after me, chin in hand.

Presently, turning in at a gate beside the way, I sat down beneath a hedge in the warm, level beams of the sun and fell to eating with huge appetite and (stolen though it was) never tasted food more sweet. I was thus rapturously employed when I heard a dolorous whine and, starting about, beheld a ragged creature on the opposite side of the hedge who glared at the food with wild and haggard eyes and reached out claw-like hands to me in supplication.

"Oh, for the love o' Christ, spare a crust!" she wailed. "Spare a bite to a grannam as dieth o' hunger. Oh, sweet Jesu — a mouthful to a poor soul as do be pined for lack o' food — "

"Off!" cried I fiercely. "What know you of hunger? Away, hag!" and I reached for my staff, whereupon she wailed and wept and clawing her dismal rags about her, crept away moaning.

But now while my jaws champed ravenously, the food had lost its savour; wherefore I cursed and choked and, springing to my feet made after her, but, seeing me following at speed, she cried out in fear and, striving to flee from me, sank on feeble knees.

"Old hag!" quoth I, "be damned for spoiling a hungry man's appetite and robbing him of what he was at pains to rob for himself!" Then I thrust the well-filled napkin into her clutching fingers and hasted away, but her raptured cry followed me as I went.

I trudged on slow and heavy through the mud, being very weary for lack of sleep and mightily downcast, heedless of the gladsome morn and the fair, fresh world about me, conscious but of my own most miserable estate; insomuch that I presently sank down on the grass by the road and, with heavy head bowed between my hands, gave myself up to black despond.

But now as I sat thus, very sick and sorrowful, I heard a sound of wheels and plodding hoofs drawing slowly near and, lifting my head at last, espied a great wain piled high with fragrant hay whereon the driver sprawled asleep, a great fat fellow whose snores rose above the jingle of harness and creak of wheels. Now hearkening to his snoring, beholding him so gross and full-fed (and I starving!) my sadness gave place to sudden, hot anger and, as the waggon lumbered by, I swung myself up behind and, clambering over the hay, raised my staff, minded to drub the fellow into wakefulness; but even then I stayed the blow, for I spied a wallet that hung to the driving seat, a large wallet of plump and inviting aspect. Reaching it down, I opened it forthwith and found therein a new-baked loaf, a roast capon delicately browned, and a jar of small beer. And now, couched luxuriously among the hay, I fell to work (tooth and nail) and though I ate in voracious haste, never before or since have I tasted aught so delectable and savoury as that stolen fowl. I was yet busied with what remained of the carcass when the fat fellow choked in his snoring, sighed, grunted, propped himself on lazy elbow and, catching sight of me, fell a-gaping. So whiles he watched open-mouthed, I finished what remained of the capon and tossed the bones over the hedge.

"Ecod!" quoth he faintly. "Oh, ecod — my dinner!"

As for me, having my mouth full, I spake not. "Ad's bobs!" said he. "A rascally, robbing thief o' the roads!"

"Even so!" I nodded and took a long draught of his beer.

"A-eating and a-drinking of a honest man's dinner, by the Lord!" said he, clenching fat fists. "Oh, ecod — a hell-fire rogue — a very lousy, scurvy dog as shall be carted and whipped and set in Sir Richard's new pillory!" At this, being engaged with the bread, I reached out my foot and kicked him (very featly) in the belly; whereat he gasped and, growing thoughtful, dolefully watched me make an end.

"If there is aught left to eat," said I, "show it me!"

"As fine a capon as was ever plucked, by the Lord!" he groaned.

"Most true!" said I, stretching myself in the hay.

"Oh!" quoth he, as to himself. "Oh, the pity on 't — so foul an end to so fair a bird!"

"Never whine!" said I, "but tell me how far hence lieth Lamberhurst."

"Better nor six mile!" he sighed, heaving himself into the driving seat.

"Why, then, do you carry me thither."

"Ad's love!" he mourned. "'T is manifest shame a rogue should thieve the food of an honest man — a man like I be as do slave morning, noon and — "

"Slave!" said I, frowning. "What know you of slavery? Be curst for a great, fat fool that speaketh lies!" Now, watching him as I lay, I saw his hand close stealthily on his heavy whip, but or ever he could turn to strike, I rose and fetched him a buffet 'neath the ear that pitched him sprawling upon the broad backs of his horses, whence (with much groaning and puffing) he presently got him safely into the road; seeing the which, I took the reins, whipping the team to faster gait so that to keep pace he must needs trot it in the mud.

"Hold!" cried he. "What would ye wi' my waggon?"

"Ride in 't!"

"Hold! Then suffer me to ride likewise for I'm scant o' breath—"

"Good! I've been scant o' breath ere now!"

"Show a little pity, master!" he groaned.

"None ever showed pity on me!"

"Nay, but—what harm have I—ever—done thee?"

"Begrudged food to a starving wretch!"

"'T was my dinner, and I do need a deal of feeding, I! Lord, how I sweat! Prithee, master, let me up. How have I deserved this?"

"Called me rogue and thief!"

"Aye, that I did—to my woe. Aye, rogue I named thee and likewise—lousy knave—and grieve for 't now, I do!"

"And so needs must you sweat awhile!" said I.

And thus I (aloft and at mine ease) and the fat fellow trotting breathless at the wheel, we went awhile (and never another word) until, what with fear of losing his goods, what with the mud and heat and sweat, the poor gross fool looked well-nigh spent and all foredone (as I had seen many a better man than he), whereupon I brought the waggon to a stand and reached down to stir him where he leant half-swooning across the wheel.

"Hark 'ee, fool, dost know of one called Brandon of Shene hereabouts?"

"Aye, truly—truly!" he gasped. "I do know—Sir Richard—passing well. Ad's bobs, my innards be all shook t' pieces, and I do be parched wi' thirst."

"Why, then, up with you!" said I and, giving him my hand, aided him back to the driving-seat. Being there, he sighed, groaned and cast a yearning eye towards his wallet.

"Parched wi' thirst I be!" he groaned.

"I've been the like ere now!" said I, and having gulped down what remained of the fellow's beer, I tossed the jar into the road, whereat he beat his breast.

"My beer!" he wailed. "And I a-famishing wi' thirst. Oh, my beer!"

"There 's sweet water i' the brook yonder!"

"You be a chap wi' no bowels, for sure!" he cried. "Aye, a hard man you be!"

"'T is a hard world," said I, "but 't is no matter for that; tell me of Sir Richard Brandon."

"Why, then, you must know I am Myles Trueman —"

"And truly, man, there be miles of you, but 't is no matter for that, either — what of Sir Richard?"

"I do be coming to he," said Trueman in surly tone. "I do farm Sir Richard's land — a hard man, see you, though just."

"So — here 's another hard man."

"Though a just — aye, and a godly! He hath restored our church weathercock an' all an' set up a fine, large and fair pillory on the green — Lunnon could n't show a finer, wi' stocks an' cucking stool complete and rare to fancy —"

"And findeth he the wherewithal to fill 'em?"

"That doth he! Aha, there be never a vagrant, gipsy nor beggar dare come anigh in Sir Richard's time. And witches be few hereabouts since old Mother Mottridge was ducked, and scolds and shrews be fewer by reason o' the brank, d' ye see?"

"Hum!" said I, "a right proper gentleman this!"

"Aye," quoth Trueman, nodding until his fat cheeks quivered, "and one that doth abhor vagrants and such-like vermin —"

"As myself," said I. To this Trueman answered nothing but fell a-fanning himself with his hat again, eyeing me warily the while.

"Art strange in these parts?" he questioned.

"Aye and no!"

"Hast met Sir Richard?"

"I have!"

"Aha!" quoth the fellow, nodding. "He had ye whipped, belike?"

"He did so."

"For stealing of a fine, fat capon, belike?"

"Nay, 'twas for another matter. But what of him; is he hale o' body, rich and well esteemed; is he strong in friends and a power at court yet?"

"No," said Trueman, flicking his plodding horses. "Neither one nor t' other!"

"How — not?" quoth I. "And wherefore?"

"Because he's dead —"

"Dead!" exclaimed I, starting up. "Dead?"

"Why, look 'ee, if he ain't dead — leastways —" But here I seized him by the throat and, twisting him round, shook him to and fro till he choked.

"Rogue — damned rogue!" I cried 'twixt gnashing teeth. "Will ye mock me then —"

"No — no!" he gasped.

"Then tell me ye lied — confess!"

"Aye, aye — I'll confess — anything — anything ye will, master!"

"Then Sir Richard lieth snug in his manor of Shene — doth he not? Aye or no?"

"Aye — aye, at Shene — at Shene!" Hereupon I loosed him and falling back on the hay, found myself all breathless and shaking as with an ague-fit. And these tremors were within me as without, since (by reason of this fellow's lying words) I had, for one black moment, doubting God's justice, seen (as it were) my countless anguished supplications for vengeance on mine enemy so much vain breath, and this my toilsome journey a labour to no purpose. But now, bowing my head, I (who knew no forgiveness) humbly prayed forgiveness of God for my doubting of God and passionately besought Him that He would cherish mine enemy and save him in health. And this to no other end but that I myself might destroy him.

"His life, oh, God — give this man's life into mine hand!" So prayed I (in my vain pride and selfish blindness) as I jogged along that sunny midsummer morn; and thereafter, my trembling having passed from me, I stretched myself out amid the hay and fell to blissful slumber.

Now to all such as, reading this my narrative, shall contemn and abhor me for the purblind fool and poor, desperate wretch I was, and who, living but for murder, could cry thus on God for the blood of his fellow man,—to all such I would say that none can despise me more utterly than I who write these words. For life since then hath learned me many truths and in some few things I am, mayhap, a little wiser.

But, because I was proud and stubborn beyond belief, because hate begetteth hate, and evil—evil, so came I to consort and make fellowship with pirates and the like rogues and to endure much of harms and dangers as battle, shipwreck, prison and solitude; until God (of His infinite mercy) brought me forth a better man therefor and, in some sense, a more worthy. All of the which I have fully and faithfully recorded for such as shall trouble to read this narrative to the end.

And so will I again to my story.

CHAPTER IV

Telleth How I Met One Adam Penfeather

I awoke to find the wagon at a standstill and Master Trueman watching me with a scowl the while his plump fingers toyed lovingly with his whipstock; but as I roused, this hand crept up to finger his several chins:

"Yonder lieth Lamberhurst!" quoth he sulkily and nodded where, in the valley below, was a village with a green wherein was a placid pool shaded by trees; and about this green stood white-walled cottages, many of them bowered in roses or honeysuckle to the very thatch (right pleasant to the eye), while beyond these again rose gables of barns or the pointed roofs of oast-houses. "Lamberhurst!" said Trueman again; whereon, having yawned and stretched myself, I clambered down into the road.

"Well?" I questioned, seeing how he watched me, triple chin in hand.

"Well," quoth he stoutly, "I be wondering what the likes o' you should be wanting wi' the likes o' Sir Richard Brandon o' Shene?"

"Nought but this," said I, shaking the hay from my tattered cloak. "I am come to watch him die, and the manner of it shall mayhap be something slow and painful!" and speaking, I clenched my right hand to a sunburnt fist. Now, looking on this clutching hand, Trueman blinked and, saying no word, whipped his horses, and the heavy wain rumbled and creaked on its way. But, when he had gone some distance, he grinned at me over his shoulder and called something whereof I caught the words "labour lost." For a moment I was minded to run after

and demand his meaning; howbeit, in a little, I turned and went down the hill, very full of thought.

Reaching the village, I found it not yet astir, for the clock of the church tower showed the time was but half after four; and now, leaning on my staff, I stared up at the church tower with its new weathercock, brave with gilding, agleam in the early sun, and from thence turned my gaze where (hard beside the pool upon the green) rose the grim shape of Sir Richard's new pillory. Just now it stood untenanted, and I wondered idly what unhappy wight was destined next to suffer there. Thus stood I some while, staring round me on this peaceful hamlet where all (save only myself) forgot their cares a while in blessed sleep; the wide road, the gabled cottages, oast-house and fragrant rickyard, — all was as I minded it five weary years since; nothing strange was there saving only Sir Richard's hateful pillory, wherefore I smote it with my staff and, cursing him that set it there, turned away.

Now within a stone's-cast of the church was a goodly tavern with a weather-beaten signboard a-swing above the door, whereon was painted what purported to be a leopard asleep and below the following legend, viz:

ROUSE ME NOT

and below this again:

Y^E CONISBY ARMS.

From this I glanced at the third finger of my left hand, where was a battered signet ring that bore the semblance of another sleeping leopard and the like inscription; and looking from the sleeping leopard on the signboard to the sleeping leopard on my ring, I fell to deep and gloomy thought. Howbeit, rousing in a while, I perceived a horse-trough hard by full of clean water and came thither, minded to wash the dust and sweat from me. But, stooping, I paused and stood thus, staring down at the face that scowled up at me; a face lean and haggard with wide,

fierce eyes agleam beneath knitted brows, a prominent nose and square chin with short, peaked, golden beard; an unlovely face framed in shaggy, yellow hair, patched and streaked with silver; and beholding lowering brow and ferocious mouth and jaw, I stood awhile marvelling at the ill changes evil and hardship had wrought in me.

For thus was it that I first beheld myself after five years of slavery.

Having looked my fill, I nodded grimly at my watery image and plunged my face and head within the trough to my great refreshment, which done, I made shift to dry myself on my tattered shirt. Thereafter, coming to the broad oak settle beside the tavern door, I sat down and fell to meditation. But now, moved by sudden impulse, I unbuckled the wallet at my girdle and, taking thence the strange dagger, unwound the neckerchief that swathed it and began to examine the weapon, first carelessly enough, then with growing interest and wonder. The blade (as I have told elsewhere) was triangular of form, very narrow and some eight inches in length and exceeding sharp of point; but that which drew and held my gaze was the wonder of its haft. I have seen and handled many fair weapons in my day, but never before or since have I beheld such rare craftsmanship as went to the chiselling of this hilt.

Of silver it was, wrought into the shape of a standing woman, her feet poised upon the small, chiselled cross guard, her head forming the pommel; naked she stood in languorous pose, arms raised and hands locked behind her head. The delicate chiselling of the features was worn somewhat by handling and rough usage, but even so, the evil beauty of the face was plain and manifest, the wanton languor of the long eyes, the mocking cruelty of the smiling mouth; the longer I viewed it, the more manifest became the nameless evil of the thing, so that I was greatly minded to whirl it into the horse-pond and be done with it. But bethinking me of my destitution and not doubting but that I might find a ready market for a thing so rare,

I wrapped it up again and, thrusting it back into my wallet, stretched myself out upon the broad settle and presently fell asleep.

But (even as I slept) methought I was back in torment; I seemed to hear again the crack of whips, the harsh cries of the drivers, the shrill screams and curses, the long, groaning breaths with the rattle and creak of the great oars as they swung ceaselessly back and forth; nay, I could even feel the kick of the oar-shaft that had escaped my fainting grasp. So real was it all that I waked groaning (as I had done many a time and oft) waked to find the kindly sun making a glory about me and a blackbird hard by a-piping most sweet to hear, while before me stood a little, thin fellow in a broad-eaved, steeple-crowned hat, who peered at me through narrowed eyes and poked at me with a stick.

"And how's the wind, shipmate?" he questioned. I sat up and scowled, whereupon he tucked the stick beneath an arm and stood viewing me, chin in hand. "You sleep mighty sound," quoth he; "here I've stood a-poking and poking at ye with my stick, d'ye see, and you snore but the louder — or was it groans?"

"For the which poking I'm minded to throw you into the horse-pond — "

"Why, that's as may be!" said he, falling back a step. "But no offence, shipmate."

"Then leave me in peace." And I laid me down again.

"You sleep mighty sound," said he, "and your bed none so easy!"

"I've known worse!"

"Aye — the rowing-bench of a Spanish floating hell, shipmate — ha?"

At this, I started and turned to look at him again. He was (as I say) a little man and clad in suit of russet brown (very trim and sober), but at his hip he bore a long rapier or tuck, while in his ears (which were trimmed to points in mighty strange fashion) swung great, gold rings such as mariners do wear; his face was lean and

sharp and wide of mouth and lighted by very quick, bright eyes, seeming to take in all things with swift-darting glances. A scar that ran from brow to chin lent to him a certain hangdog air; as to his age, it might have been thirty or forty or sixty for, though he seemed vigorous and active, with smooth unwrinkled face, his hair was snow-white.

"Well, shipmate," he questioned, meeting my searching gaze, "and how d' ye like me?"

"No whit!"

"Sink me, but that's plain enough!" said he, smiling ruefully. "So there's nought in me as draws you, then?"

"No!"

"'T is pity, for I've a feeling we shall sail aboard ship together yet."

"How should you know I've rowed aboard a Spanish ship?"

"You bear the mark, shipmate; as you lay a-groaning in your sleep, I took occasion to cast an eye over ye—d' ye see—and what wi' the new-healed scars on your wrist, your sunburnt skin and the desperate sink or swim look o' you, I judged you new-broke from slavery and named a Spanish galleass at a venture, d' ye see."

"You are an observant man, it seems," said I, frowning.

"I have a way o' putting one and one together; 't is a trick I 've found useful now and then!"

"Ha!" said I, mighty scornful. "You 'll be telling me my own name next!"

"Why, as to that," said he, pinching his long, clean-shaven chin thoughtfully, "how would Conisby suit?"

"Damned spy!" I cried and caught him in my grip; the fellow never so much as flinched, and there was something formidable in his very quietude.

"Easy all, shipmate!" said he mildly and staring up at me eye to eye. "Use me kindly for I 'm a timid soul with a good heart, meaning no offence—"

"How learned ye my name? What devilry is here?"

"None in the world, Lord love ye! 'T is just my trick of adding one and one, d' ye see — there's the ring on your finger and the signboard above you."

"And wherefore spy on a sleeping man?"

"Because I 'm a lonely soul doth seek a comrade. Because the moment I clapped eyes on you I felt drawn to ye and, seeing the scars on your wrist, knew 'em for shackle marks — and 't was a bond betwixt us."

"How a bond?"

"Loose me, shipmate, and I 'll show ye." Which done, he bared a long and sinewy arm, discovering thereon marks of old fetter sores like those upon my own.

"So you 've slaved at an oar, then?"

"Aye, shipmate!"

"Endured the shame of stripes and nakedness and filth?"

"Aye, shipmate. And more, I 've fought for my life on the Inca Death-stone ere now, as you may see by my ears if you know aught of the Maya Indians."

And here without so much as a "by your leave" he sat him down on the bench beside me and, leaning forward, began to trace idle patterns in the dust with his stick.

"Shipmate," said he, "I 'm a timid man —"

"As a snake," quoth I, "and as deadly!"

Here he stayed his drawing to glance at me askance, to sigh and shake his head. "You misjudge me," said he; "howbeit we 'll say cautious — a cautious man with an honest, kindly heart as yearns to fellowship."

"And with a pistol 'neath each armpit!"

"True!" he nodded. "I might ha' shot ye a moment since and did n't — which doth but prove my words, for I 'm one as never harmed any man — without just cause — save once and that," here he sighed, "was years agone. And me a lonely man to this day. So 't is I seek a comrade — a right man, one at odds wi' fortune and the world and therefore apt to desperate ploys, one hath suffered and endured and therefore scornful of harms and dangers, one as knoweth the sea. Now let that man

pledge me the blood-brotherhood, let him stand staunch and faithful — blow fair, blow foul — and I 'll help him to a fortune greater than ever came out of Manoa, El Dorado, or the Indies. Come, what d' ye say, friend?"

"I say sheer off and leave me to my sleep, lest I mischief you."

"Ha' ye no lust for riches, then?"

"No more than I have to your company, and I love that less and less."

"'T is pity!" said he, shaking his head. "Aye, 't is pity, for I do like you more and more, such a fine blood and beef, dare-and-be-damned, gibbet-like figure of a rogue, shipmate, as would grace a cross roads better than most, which is one reason I was drawn to ye, d' ye see, I being a quiet soul — "

"And a pirate, like as not!"

"Easy, shipmate, easy. Passion is an ill word to steer by. And I 'm a lonely man as seeks a comrade — "

"And I 'm a lonely man that loveth solitude, so e'en now will I go seek it!" and I rose.

"Stay a bit, shipmate, haul your wind and listen!" said he, laying hand on my arm. "Stand in wi' me — blow high, blow low — and I offer you wealth untold — riches, fortune — "

"Tush!" said I, "empty things all." At this his hold tightened while his keen gaze held mine.

"More than this," said he slowly, "I offer you rank, honours, power and mayhap — love, shipmate."

"Enough!" quoth I. "You offer nought I desire."

"Why then," said he, "in the Fiend's name, what would ye have?"

"Vengeance!" I answered and, shaking off his grasp, I turned and strode away along the dusty road.

CHAPTER V

How I Came to Conisby Shene

It being yet full early for my purpose I took to the woods and presently chancing upon a little stream that bubbled pleasantly 'mid shady willows, I sat myself down within this greeny bower and fell to watching the hurrying waters of this brook and hearkening to its drowsy murmur. And lying thus, with the good green world around me, the sunny air blithe with the mellow piping of birds and the soft wind rustling the leaves about me, what must I have in mind but bloodshed and the destruction of my enemy, insomuch that reaching a stone from the brook I drew the knife from my girdle and set about straightening the blade thereof.

I was thus employed when all at once the leaves on the opposite side of the brook were parted and a girl-child appeared. For a long moment we eyed each other across the brook, then all at once her pretty lips curved to a smile.

"Little maid," said I, furtively thrusting the knife into my belt, "art not afraid of me then?"

"Nay!" she answered, smiling yet and shaking her golden head.

"And why?"

"I do like your eyes, big man, kind eyes they be!"

"Are they?" said I, glancing from her smiling innocence into the brook.

"Aye, and your voice — I do like that too — 't is low and soft — like father's."

"And who 's your father?"

"He be th' blacksmith."

"How old are you?"

"Seven, an' a big maid I be. Will 'ee aid me 'cross t' brook, now?"

So I lifted her over, and there we sat, side by side, she laughing and talking and I hearkening to her childish prattle with marvellous great pleasure. Presently I ventured to touch her soft cheek, to stroke her curls and finding she took this not amiss, summoned courage to stoop and kiss her.

How long we had sat thus I know not when I was aroused by a shrill, harsh voice and, turning, beheld a bony woman who peered at us through the leaves.

"Susan Ann!" she cried. "Oh, you Susan, come away! Come quick, or I'll run for your mother."

"The child is safe enough!" said I, frowning but clasping the small damsel closer within my arm.

"Safe?" cries the woman, turning on me in a fury. "Safe — aye, forsooth, wi' a great, ill rogue the like o' you! Loose her — loose her, or I'll scream and rouse the village on ye for a wild gipsy wastrel that ye are!" And here the old harridan railed at me until the child whimpered for fear, and even I blenched before the woman's fierce aspect and shrewish tongue. Then, while she loaded me with abuse, a ceaseless torrent (and no lack of breath) I kissed the little maid's tear-wetted cheek and setting her back across the brook, stood to watch until child and woman were lost to my sight. Then I sat down, scowling at the hurrying water, chin on fist, for my black humour, banished awhile by the child's innocent faith in me, was returned and therewith an added bitterness. Scowling yet, I plucked forth my knife, and, seizing my staff, set to trim and shape it to a formidable weapon; and as I worked I cursed this woman deep and oft, yet (even so) knew she had the right on 't, for truly I was a rogue, an outcast of unlovely look and unlovely ways, a desperate fellow unfit for the company of decent folk, much less an innocent child; and yet, remembering those fearless child-eyes, the kiss of those pure child-lips, I sighed amain betwixt my muttered cursings.

At last, having trimmed my bludgeon to a nicety, I laid it by and sat brooding, the knife betwixt my knees; now a beam of sun falling athwart the leaves lit upon the broad blade of the knife and made of it a glory. And beholding this and the hand that grasped it, I took pleasure to heed how strong and sinewy were my fingers and how the muscles bulged beneath the brown skin of my forearm; and turning the glittering steel this way and that, I fell to joyous thought of my enemy and of my vengeance, now so near.

"To-night!" said I to myself. "Death ever cometh with more terrors in the dark! To-night!" But now, little by little, my joy gave place to anger that the night must be so long a-coming; and, glancing up, I cursed the sun that it must needs shine and the gladsome day that it was not grim night. And presently to anger was added a growing fear lest mine enemy might (by some hap) elude me at the eleventh hour, — might, even now, be slipping from my reach. Now at this a sweat brake out on me and leaping to my feet I was minded to seek him out and end the matter there and then. "Why wait for to-night?" I asked myself. "Surely in the gladsome light of day Death findeth an added bitterness. Why wait for night, then?"

So I stood awhile abating within myself, then, catching up my knotted bludgeon, I set off along the stream incontinent, following a path I had trodden many a time when but a lad; a path that led on through mazy thickets, shady dells and green coppices dappled with sunlight and glad with the trilling melody of birds; but ever as I went, before my eyes was a man who twisted in my grasp and died, over and over again, and in my ears the sounds of his agony. And ever as I went trees reached out arms as if to stay me, and bushes stretched forth little, thorny fingers that caught my garments as if to hinder me from my purpose. But I brushed them aside with my scarred arms or beat them down with my heavy staff, o'er-leaping hedge and ditch and fallen tree until I reached the high-

way, and even as I came there, a distant clock chimed the hour of ten. I quickened my pace, twirling my staff as I went so that the two or three wayfarers I chanced to meet drew from my neighbourhood and eyed me mightily askance.

Having gone thus some mile or so, I came to a wall that bordered the road, a high and massy wall, and following this, to a pair of gates set well back from the highway, with pillars of stone each surmounted by a couchant leopard carved in the stone. Now these gates were of iron, very lofty and strong and fast shut, but beside these was a smaller gate or postern of wood hard by the gatehouse where stood a lusty fellow in fair livery, picking his teeth with a straw and staring at the square toes of his shoes. Hearing me approach he glanced up and, frowning, shook his head and waved me away.

"There 's no road for the likes o' you!" said he, while I was yet at some distance. "Off wi' you!" Howbeit, seeing I still advanced, he clapped to the gate and, letting fall the bar, cursed me roundly through the grille.

"I would see Sir Richard Brandon!"

"Then ye can't — nowise. So be off and be danged!"

"Open the gate!" said I.

"Be hanged for a murderous-looking rogue, a lousy thief, a wastrel and a hang-dog knave!" said he all in a breath.

"All true enough!" agreed I. "And now, open the gate!"

"Be danged for a prigging gipsy — 'A Gad! I'll have ye clapped i' the pillory for a black-visaged clapper-claw!"

"Unbar!" said I, "or it shall go plaguy ill wi' you when I come in."

At this he spat upon me through the grille and chuckled. Now, glancing about, I espied a stone hard by about the bigness of a man's head and, laying by my staff, I wrenched the stone from where it lay and raising it aloft, hove it with all my strength; whereon the gate crashed

open so suddenly as to catch the fellow a buffet that laid him sprawling on his back, and as he strove to rise I pinned him down with my staff and kicked him heartily.

"And now," said I, "up with you and bring me to your master."

But or ever he could do aught but groan and rub his hurts, I heard the sound of approaching hoof-strokes and turning, beheld a lady bravely mounted who galloped furiously towards us down the avenue. When almost upon us she swung her powerful beast aside and, checking him with strong wrist, sat looking down at me from the shade of her plumed hat.

"What is this?" she demanded, and her eyes swept over me grey and wide and fearless. "Who — who are you?"

Now at the sound of her voice so rich and wonder-sweet, I felt strangely abashed and, finding no word, turned from her to scowl down at the man I had pinned beneath my broken shoe.

"Who are you?" she questioned again. "Speak!"

"A rogue!" said I, keeping my head averted, "a creeper o' hedges!"

"Ah — is 't you!" said she in softer tone, "I saw you for a moment by lightning-flash near the gibbet. You are my man o' the woods, and sir, I owe you much — very much — indeed, sir, if —"

"I am no 'sir'!" quoth I shortly.

"Gregory," said she, looking down on the fellow 'neath my foot, "Gregory, get up!"

"Gregory," said I, "stir not!"

"Sir, would you hurt my servant?" said she, knitting her slender brows.

"I' faith!" I nodded. "The uncivil rogue forced me to burst open the gate."

"And why are you here? Who are you? What is your name?" cried she a little breathlessly, and I wondered at the fixed intensity of her gaze.

"Gregory," said I, taking my foot from his middle but

threatening him with my staff, "I am come for no traffic with maids, so rise up and bring me to your master."

"Nay," groaned the fellow, turning up his eyes, "'t is thing impossible; here 's only my lady —"

"And I seek your master — is he within?"

"Nay," said Gregory, flinching beneath my staff. "As my lady shall tell 'ee — he is not here —"

"Ha!" quoth I. "That will I see for myself." But as I turned to stride up the avenue, my lady wheeled her horse, barring my way.

"Whither go you?" she demanded, her eyes holding mine.

"To the house for Sir Richard. I have been at some small pains to gain speech with him."

"To what end?"

"Why truly," I answered, leaning upon my staff and viewing her eye to eye, "'t is a matter of vital moment, aye — in a manner of speaking — 't is a matter of life and death betwixt us."

Now as I stood thus I could not but be conscious of her glowing, vigorous beauty, her body's noble shape and the easy grace of her as she sat her fretting horse, swaying to his every movement. And to me, in my rags, she seemed no woman but a goddess rather, proud, immaculate and very far removed; and yet these proud lips could (mayhap) grow soft and tender; these clear eyes that met mine so fearlessly —

The staff was wrenched from my loosened grasp and Gregory, leaping to his feet, fetched me therewith staggering blow on blow, shouting with his every stroke:

"Ho, Peter! Roger! Will! Ho — hither, lads all! Loose the dogs — hither to me, a God's name!"

But, though mused with blows, I rushed in blindly and, closing with the fellow, got him fairly by the throat and shook him to and fro. And now was I minded to choke him outright but, even then, spied a cavalier who spurred his horse against me. Hereupon I dashed the breathless Gregory aside and turned to meet my new assailant, a

spruce young gallant he, from curling lovelock to Spanish boots. I remember cursing savagely as his whip caught me, then, or ever he could reach me again, I sprang in beneath the head of his rearing horse and, seizing the rein close by the bridle, began to drag and wrench at the bit. I heard shouts and a woman's cry of fear, but I strove only the fiercer, while up and up reared the great roan horse, snorting in terror, his forelegs lashing wildly. Above tossing mane the eyes of his rider glared down at me as, laughing exultant, I wrenched savagely at the bridle until, whinnying with pain and terror, the great beast, losing his balance, crashed over backwards into the dust. Leaping clear of those desperate, wild-thrashing hooves, I found myself beset by divers fellows armed with staves who closed upon me, shouting; and above these, her eyes wide, her full, red lips close-set, my lady looked down on me and I (meeting that look) laughed, even as her fellows rushed me.

"Go cosset your pretty springald, wench!" But even then, dazed and half-blinded by a hail of blows, I staggered, sank to my knees, struggled up again, smiting with bare fists. A flame seemed to flash before my eyes, a taste of blood was on my tongue, and all sounds grew faint and far away as, stumbling blindly, I threw up my arms, tripped and plunged down and down into an engulfing darkness and knew no more.

CHAPTER VI

Of My Shameful Sufferings and How I Was Delivered Therefrom

I awoke with a sound in my ears like the never-ceasing surge and hiss of waters, a sound that waxed ever louder. Heakening to this, I presently sought to move and wondered, vaguely uneasy, to find this impossible; I strove now to lift my right hand, found it fast held, tried my left and found it in like case and so became conscious of something that gripped me about the throat, and ever my wonder and unease grew. And now, opening my eyes, the first thing they lighted on was a small pool of blood and beyond this a battered turnip, and beyond this the carcass of a dead cat, and beyond this again, a pair of trim, buckled shoes, cotton stockings, wide breeches and a broad belt where swung a tuck or rapier prodigiously long of blade; in a while (my eyes ranging higher yet) I beheld a thin face scarred from mouth to eyebrow, a brown face with bright, very quick eyes and strange ears, they being cut to points like a dog's ears. Now looking at this face, it seemed to me in hazy fashion that somewhere and at some time I had seen such a face before.

All this while, the noise I have likened to the sea had been growing louder, so that I began to recognise voices and even words and, lifting my head as well as I might (by reason of the thing that gripped my throat) I saw faces all about me. They hemmed me in on every side and stretched away to the churchyard wall.

Then, all at once, the knowledge of my situation rushed upon me; I was in the pillory.

"Huroor! 'E be a-comin' round!" cried a voice.

"Time, too!" shouted a great, strapping fellow near-by. "'T is sinful shame to waste good bad-eggs on rogue as knoweth not when 'e do be hit! He be a mark as babe could n't miss — a proper big 'un!" So saying, the fellow let fly an egg at me, the which, striking the board within an inch of my face, filled the air with suffocating stench.

This was a signal for me to become a target for all the garbage of the village. And now, indeed, good cause had I to be thankful for my thick mane of hair which (in some sort) saved me from sundry cuts and bruises, howbeit my face was soon clotted with blood and filth.

Vain were it to tell all the frenzy of rage that possessed me as I stood thus helpless against my howling tormentors, chief of whom was the great fellow I have mentioned who (by reason of height and length of arm) struck me oftenest; once indeed when (beside myself with fury) I raised my head to curse him, he took me a blow in the mouth with some vile missile that set my very gums a-bleeding.

"Lord love ye, shipmate — that 's the spirit!" said a voice below me. "But keep the wind o' them — don't let 'em rake ye — douse your figurehead. Lie low, shipmate, lie low and trust to your comrade, Adam Penfeather — and that 's me. Patience is the word!"

Looking whence the voice came, I beheld the man with whom I had talked that morning; now as our glances met, one of his bright eyes closed slowly and, nodding twice, he turned and elbowed his way through the crowd. Small liking had I for this fellow, but with his departure a sense of loneliness gripped me, and needs must I lift my head to stare after him, whereupon a rotten egg struck me above the eye, causing a most intolerable smart. At this moment, too, the great fellow swung a cat's carcass by the tail but, or ever he could hurl this stinking missile, a hand clouted him heavily over the ear from behind, tumbling his hat off, whereupon he turned, bellowing with rage, and smote his nearest neighbour with the foul thing

meant for me. In an instant all was uproar around these two, as the crowd, forgetting me, surged about them. Thus for some while, during which the fight raged, I was left unmolested and looked hither and thither amid the swaying throng for this fellow, Adam Penfeather, but he was vanished quite.

At length, the big fellow having sufficiently trounced his opponent, the crowd betook itself (and very joyously) to my further baiting and torment. Now as I hung thus in my shame and misery, faint with my hurts and parched with cruel thirst, my gaze lighted upon a small, bony man — a merry-eyed fellow with wide, up-curving mouth — who laughed and jested continually; it was as he stooped for some missile or other that his eye met mine, and in that bright eye methought I read a sudden pity.

"Oh, cull," says I hoarsely, "a mouthful o' water —"

"Pal," says he, winking, "all 's bowmon!" Whereupon he turned and vanished in the crowd and I, burning in a fever of thirst, panted for his return, straining my eyes for sight of him; then, as he came not, I groaned and drooped my head, and lo! even then he was before me bearing a tin pannikin full of water. This in hand, he mounted the steps of the pillory and, despite the jeers and hootings of the crowd, was lifting the life-giving water to my eager lips when forth leapt the big fellow and sent water and pannikin flying with a savage blow of his fist.

"None o' that, peddler!" he roared. And now, as I groaned and licked at bleeding lips with swollen tongue, the little man turned (quick as flash) tripped up the great fellow's heels and, staying for no more, made off through the crowd that gave him passage, howling its acclaim.

The afternoon dragged wearily on and, what with the suffocating stench of the filth that plastered me, what with heat and dust and agonising thirst, my suffering grew almost beyond endurance; a deadly nausea seized me and I came nigh to swooning. But now, in this my great extremity, of a sudden, from somewhere on the outskirts of the crowd rose a shrill cry of "Fire!" the which cry, being

taken up by others, filled the air with panic; the crowd melted as if by magic until the village green and the road were quite deserted. All this I noted but dimly (being more dead than alive), when I became conscious of one that spake in my ear.

"Stand by, shipmate, stand by! There's never a rogue left — all run to the fire — stand by to slip your moorings!"

"Let be," I groaned. "I'm a dead man!"

"Then here's that shall make ye quick," said this fellow Penfeather, dangling a great key before my swimming eyes. "Here's freedom from your devil's trap and a plaguy time I've had to come by it."

"Then for the love o' God — let me out," I groaned.

"Easy all, shipmate!" said he, turning the key upon his finger. "For look 'ee now, here's me (a timid man) run no small risk this last half hour and all for you. Now a bargain's a bargain, you'll agree?"

"Well?" said I faintly.

"Why, then, shipmate, if I free ye of your bonds, wilt be my comrade sworn? Aye or no?"

"No!" said I. "Plague take ye that bargain with dying man. No!"

"Why, then," sighed he, "here's a good rick ablaze, here's John Purdy the beadle wi' his head broke, and here's me in a sweat, alack — and all to no purpose, since needs must you in your bilboes bide."

"Do but get me a draught of water!" I pleaded.

"Nary a drop!" said he, spinning the key on his finger under my nose. "Nor yet a foaming stoup o' good Kentish ale — nut-brown — "

"Ha, rogue — rogue!" I panted 'twixt parched lips. "I'll yet — avenge this torment — an' I live!"

"The legs of a man," said he, "are a vain thing and his strength likewise, and as to vengeance, shipmate, well — how goeth your vengeance as be more to ye than fortune or riches?" Here he paused but I held my peace, and he continued, "Here's you now, you that was so mighty and

fierce — aye, a very hell-fire roarer — here's that same you a-hanging here a very helpless, pitiful fool, shipmate, and thirsty, 't would seem — "

Here I groaned again.

"And one not oversweet!" said he, stopping his nose.

Hereupon I cursed him, though faintly, and he comes a step nearer.

"'T is said my Lady Brandon and her gallant Sir Rupert Dering — him you overthrew, shipmate, do mean to come and take a look at you anon, though 't is shame you should be made a raree show — burn me!"

Hereupon, I fell into a sudden raging fury, striving so desperately against my bonds that the devilish engine wherein I stood shook and rattled again; but I strove to no purpose and so presently hung there spent and bruised and breathless whiles Penfeather spun the key on his finger and sighed.

"Shipmate," said he, "wherefore irk yourself wi' bonds? Say but the word and I 'll deliver ye, bring ye to safe harbourage and cherish ye with much good ale. Be persuaded, now."

"Why, then," groaned I, "give me but until to-morrow to do what I will — and I 'm yours —"

"Done!" said he, and forthwith set key to padlock; but scarce had he freed the head-board than he falls a-cursing 'neath his breath. "Easy, comrade, easy!" quoth he softly. "Bide still awhile — hither cometh yon beefy fool back again — so will I make show of miscalling ye till he be gone." The which he did forthwith, giving me "scurvy rogue" and the like. Now, lifting my head, whom should I behold but that same tall fellow had been my chief tormentor and who now hasted over the green towards us.

"It be nowt but Farmer Darrell's rick ablaze," said he to Penfeather, "so let 'un burn, says I; Farmer Darrell be no friend o' mine. So I be come to sport wi' yon big rogue awhile." Herewith he stooped for some missile to cast at me; but now I straightened my back, the head-

board gave and, ere the fellow was aware, I was creeping swiftly upon him; taken thus by surprise small chance had he for, leaping on him, I bore him over on his back and, kneeling on him, buried my fingers in his throat. And so I choked him (right joyfully) till Penfeather gripped my arm.

"Lord love me!" cried he. "Will ye kill the fool?"

"That will I!"

"And hang for him?"

"Nay — he 's scarce worth it."

"Then, devil burn ye — loose his windpipe!" So I loosed the fellow's throat and, despite his feeble kicks, began to drag him over the grass.

"What now, comrade?" said Penfeather. "Sink me, what now?"

"Watch and see!" So I brought the fellow to the pillory wherein I set him and, plucking the key from Penfeather, locked him there in my stead; which done I kicked him once or twice and, having found the cat's carcass, made shift to hang the stinking thing about his neck; then, tossing the key into the pond, I took to my heels and left the fellow groaning mighty dismal.

Now scarce was I clear of the village than I was again seized of a deadly sickness and vertigo, so that I stumbled and was like to fall but that Penfeather propped me with his shoulder. In this fashion I made shift to drag myself along, nor would he suffer me stay or respite (maugre my weakness) until, following the brook, he had brought me into the green solitude of the woods.

Here then I sank down, sucking up the cool, sweet water 'twixt parched lips, drinking until Penfeather stayed me lest I should do myself hurt thereby. Thereafter, my strength reviving, I bathed my divers wounds (the which, though painful, were of small account), and fell to cleansing my spattered garments as well as I might.

"So we 're to be comrades, after all!" said Penfeather, watching me where he sat hard by.

"Aye — to-morrow!"

"And how goeth vengeance, shipmate?" At this I turned on him with clenched fist. "Nay, easy does it," said he, never budging, "for if 't was the folly of vengeance brought ye in the *peccadille*, 't was your comrade Adam Penfeather got ye out again — so easy all!"

"'T was you fired the rick, then?"

"None other!"

"'T is a hanging matter, I 've heard!"

"Why a man must needs run some small risk for his comrade, d' ye see —"

"Then, Adam Penfeather, I 'm your debtor."

"Nay, there be no debts 'twixt comrades o' the Brotherhood; 't is give and take, share and share!" And speaking, he drew forth a purse and, emptying store of money on the grass betwixt us, divided it equally and pushed a pile of silver and copper towards me.

"And what 's this?" I demanded.

"Share and share, comrade!"

"But I 'm no comrade o' yours till after to-night."

"Aha!" said he, pinching his long chin. "Is 't more vengeance then?"

"Keep your money till it be earned!" I muttered.

"Sink me — and there 's pride for ye! Pride which is a vain thing and vengeance which is a vainer. Lord love me, shipmate, 't is plain to see you 're o' the quality, 'spite your rags — blue blood, high breeding, *noblesse oblige* and all the rest on't."

"Stint your gab!" said I, scowling.

"'T is writ large all over ye," he went on placidly enough. "As for me, I 'm but a plain man wi' no time for vengeance and no whit o' pride about me anywhere. What I says to you is, get to wind'ard o' vengeance — nay, heave it overboard, shipmate — and you 'll ride the easier, aye and sweeter, and seek something more useful — gold for instance; 't is a handy thing, I 've heard say — so ha' done wi' vengeance!"

"No!" said I, frowning. "Not — nay, not for all Bartlemy's treasure!"

"Aha!" quoth he softly. "So you've heard tell of it then, along the Spanish Main?"

"I heard tell of it last night in a cave from a sailorman."

"How?" said he, starting, and with keen eyes glancing hither and thither. "A sailorman — hereabouts?"

"Damme!" said I. "The country seems thick o' sailormen."

"Ha! D'ye say so? And what like was this one?"

"A comely rogue that sang strange song."

"Ah!" said Penfeather, his eyes narrowing. "A song, says you — and strange — how, strange?"

"'T was all of dead men and murder!"

"D'ye mind any line on't, shipmate?"

"Aye, the words of it went somewhat like this:

"Some on a knife did part wi' life
And some a bullet took O!
But —"

Now here, as I stopped at a loss, my companion took up the rhyme almost unconsciously and below his breath.

"But three times three died plaguily
A-wriggling on a hook O!"

"Comrade!" said he in the same low voice. "Did ye see ever among these mariners a one-handed man, a tall man wi' a hook in place of his left hand — a very bright, sharp hook?" And now as Penfeather questioned me, he seized my wrist, and I was amazed at the iron grip of him.

"No!" I answered.

"Nay," said he, loosing his hold. "How should you — he's dead, along o' so many on 'em! He's done for — him and his hook, devil burn him!"

"A hook both long and stout and strong
They died by gash o' hook O!"

"Ah!" I cried. "So that was the kind of hook!"

"Aye!" nodded Penfeather. "That was the kind. A

bullet's bad, a knife's worse, but a steel hook, shipmate, very sharp, d' ye see, is a death no man should die. Shipmate, I've seen divers men dead by that same hook — torn and ripped, d' ye see — like a dog's fangs! I'd seen many die ere then, but that way — 't was an ill sight for queasy stomachs!"

"And he — this man with the hook is dead, you say?"

"And burning in hell-fire!"

"Are you sure?"

"I killed him, shipmate!"

"You!"

"I, shipmate. We fought on a shelf o' rock high above the sea, my knife agin his knife and hook — 't was that same hook gave me this scar athwart my jaw — but as he struck, I struck and saw him go spinning over and over, down and down, and splash into the sea. And for three days I watched that bit o' shore, living on shellfish and watching for him, to make sure I had finished him at last."

"And these other rogues?" asked I.

"What like were they, shipmate?" Hereupon I described (as fully as I might) the three sailormen I had fought with in the hedge tavern (albeit I made no mention of the maid) while Penfeather listened, nodding now and then and pinching at his long chin. "And this other fellow," said he, when I had done, "this fellow that sang — d' ye know if his name chanced to be Mings — Abnegation Mings, comrade?"

"The very same!"

"Strange!" quoth Penfeather and thereafter sat staring gloomily down into the rippling waters of the brook for a while. "I wonder?" said he at last. "I wonder?"

"What think ye shall bring these fellows so far from the coast; what should they be after?"

"Me, shipmate!"

"You!" said I for the second time, marvelling at the strange quiet of him. "And what would they have of you?"

"My life, shipmate, and one other thing. What that thing is I will tell you when we have drunk the blood-

brotherhood! But now it behoveth me to be a-doing, so I 'll away. But when you shall seek me, as seek me ye will, shipmate, shalt hear of me at the Peck-o'-Malt tavern, which is a small, quiet place 'twixt here and Bedgebury Cross. Come there at any hour, day or night, and say 'The Faithful Friend,' and you shall find safe harbourage. Remember, comrade, the word is 'The Faithful Friend,' and if so be ye can choose your time — night is better." So saying, he arose.

"Wait!" said I, pointing to the coins yet lying on the grass. "Take your money!"

"'T is none o' mine," answered he, shaking his head. "Keep it or throw it away — 't is all one to me!" Then he went away through the wood and, as he went, I thought he walked with a new and added caution.

CHAPTER VII

How I Fell in with One God-be-here, a Peddler

Evening was at hand as I reached a little alehouse well away from the road and pleasantly secluded by trees: thither came I, fondling Penfeather's money in my pocket, for I was again mightily sharp set. But all at once I stopped, for, passing the open lattice, I heard loud laughter and a merry voice.

"And there, believe me, gossips" (quoth this voice), "as sure as this be beef — aye, and good beef and cooked to a turn, mistress — there 's this great, lob-lolly, hectoring Tom Button fast i' the pillory; and by this good ale, a woeful sight, his eyes blacked, his nose a-bleeding, his jerkin torn and a dead cat about his neck, oho — aha! Tom Button — big Tom, fighting Tom, so loud o' tongue and ready o' fist — Tom as have cowed so many — there is he, fast by the neck and a-groaning, see ye, gossips, loud enough for six; wish I may die else! And the best o' the joke is — the key be gone, as I 'm a sinner! So they needs must break the lock to get him out. Big Tom, as have thrashed every man for miles."

But here merry voice and laughter ceased, and a buxom woman thrust smiling face from the window and face (like her voice) was kindly when she addressed me:

"What would ye, young master?"

"A little food, mistress," answered I, touching my weather-worn hat and pulling it lower over my bruised and swollen features.

"Why, come in, master, come in; there be none here but my Roger and Godby the peddler, as knoweth every one."

So I entered forthwith a small, snug chamber, and seating myself in the darkest corner, acknowledged the saluta-

tions of the two men while the good-looking woman, bustling to and fro, soon set before me a fair joint of roast beef with bread and ale upon which I incontinent fell to.

The two men sat cheek by jowl at the farther end of the table, one a red-faced, lusty fellow; the other, a small, bony man who laughed and ate and ate and laughed and yet contrived to talk all the while, that it was a wonder to behold.

"Was you over to Lamberhurst way, master?" said he to me, all at once.

"Aye!" I nodded, busy with the beef.

"Why, then, happen ye saw summat o' the sport they had wi' the big gipsy i' the pillory — him as 'saulted my Lady Brandon and nigh did for her ladyship's coz?"

"Aye," said I again, bending over my platter.

"'T is ill sport to bait a poor soul as be helpless, I think — nay I know, for I've stood there myself ere now, though I won't say as I did n't clod this fellow once or twice to-day myself — I were a rare clodder in my time, aha! Did you clod this big rogue, master?"

"No!"

"And wherefore not?"

"Because," said I, cutting myself more beef. "I happened to be that same rogue." Here Roger the landlord stared, his buxom wife shrank away and even the talkative peddler grew silent awhile, viewing me with his shrewd, merry eyes.

"Aha!" said he at last. "'T was you, was it?"

"It was!"

"And why must ye 'sault a noble lady?"

"I never did!"

"Gregory swears to it."

"Gregory 's a liar!"

"Which is true enough — so he be!" nodded the landlord.

"And a cruel hard man!" added his wife. "But Lord, young master, they do ha' used ye ill — your poor face, all bruised and swole it be!"

"Which it be!" nodded Roger. "Likewise cut! Which be ill for 'ee, though — like Godby here — I won't say but what I mought n't ha' took a heave at ye, had I been there, it being nat'ral-like to heave things at such times, d' ye see."

"Very natural!" said I.

"And then why," questioned the little peddler, "why break open the wicket gate?"

"To get in!"

"Aha!" quoth Bodby the peddler, winking roguish eye. "On the prigging lay perchance, cull, or peradventure the millken? Speak plain, pal, all 's bowmon!"

"I 'm no flash cull," said I, "neither buzz, file, millken nor scamperer."

"Mum, pal, mum! I 'm no more flash than you be, though I 've no love for the harmon-becks, as Roger here will tell 'ee. A peddler be I and well liked — wish I may swing else! Aye, well beloved is kind Godby, specially by wenches and childer — aha, many 's the yard o' riband and lace, the garters, pins, ballads, gingerbread men, pigs and elephants very fair gilt as they 've had o' kind Godby, and all for love! And yet, plague and perish it — here 's me warned off my pitch, here 's me wi' the damned catch-polls on my heels, and all along o' this same Gregory Bragg — rot him!"

"As to all that, I know not, but this I 'll swear to; you are a man, Godby the peddler, and one with a bold and kindly heart inside you."

"How so?" he questioned, his bright eyes all of a twinkle. "How so, my bully boy?"

"That pannikin of water."

"Which you did n't get, my cock's-body lad!"

"Which you were man enough to bring me."

"Which Tom Button did ye out of!"

"Which you knocked him down for!"

"Which is Gospel-true, Roger and Cicely. 'T was a neat throw; Tom bumped heavy — aye, uncommon flat were Tom, let me eat worms else!"

"For all of the which," said I, cutting more beef, "I ask you now to drink a stoup of ale with me."

"Wi' all my heart!" cried the peddler.

"Then," said I, laying my money on the table, "let us all drink in fellowship, for ale, like fellowship, is a goodly thing, and good things be rare in this world!"

"And that's true, o' conscience!" smiled the buxom Cicely.

"And ye'll find no better brew than our own!" quoth Roger.

"And that I'll swear to!" laughed the peddler. "Cram me wi' spiders else!"

So the good ale was brought and Godby, lifting his tankard, smiled and nodded over the creamy foam.

"Here's a griping colic to every catchpoll, harmonbeck and the like vermin 'twixt this and London Town!" He lifted the ale to his lips, but suddenly he set it down untasted and rose. "Friends, I'm took!" quoth he. "See yonder!" As he spake the narrow doorway was darkened and two rough fellows entered, and each bore a formidable bludgeon.

"Aye," said one, a big, surly-voiced fellow, "here be us, peddler, and there be you; so best come easy — an' no tricks, mind!"

"Then easy does it, lads!" answered Godby, seemingly no whit abashed. "No lamb could come milder than Godby — aye lambs, doves and babes is roaring lions compared wi' Godby — so easy does it. What is't this time, codgers?"

"Fower hours i' the pillory, three i' the stocks, and a month in Maidstone jail, and that's what!"

"And enough too!" growled Roger the landlord, clenching hairy fist and glancing furtively towards a rusty sword suspended above the hearth.

"Let be, Roger; I'm a lamb!" sighed the peddler. "And I wouldn't ha' you in trouble by me; besides, this room o' yourn, though snug, ain't fit for struggling nor striving! So, friends — good-by!" Then he turned away,

between his two captors, but as he did so, his bright eyes for one moment met mine and in his look I read appeal.

Now scarce were they gone when I got me to my feet, whereat the landlord, Roger, did the like.

"What 's to do?" he questioned, glancing yearningly from me to the rusty sword.

"Why now," said I, counting out my reckoning, "bide you here — for your good wife's sake."

"Aye, do now, Roger!" she pleaded. "'T would be ruination to us!"

"Moreover," continued I, reaching for my cudgel, "they are but two, so bide you here." Then I stepped forth of the tavern and very soon came up with the two fellows, their prisoner walking betwixt them meekly enough. But, as I approached, they halted all three.

"And what be you after?" demanded the surly fellow.

"You!"

"And what d' ye want of us — hey?"

"Your prisoner!"

"Ha! And what for him?"

"I 've a mind to him!"

"Oh! Ye have, eh?"

"I have. Do I get him?"

"Be curst for a black, ugly rogue."

"That 's no answer!"

"'T is all you 'll get o' we, save 'ard knocks!" said the man, spitting in his hand and taking firm grip of his bludgeon.

"Why, then, I must take him!" said I.

"Try and be damned!" roared the fellow. "Ha — look alive, Jem!" And whirling up his staff, he made at me amain; but I sprang aside and, as his rush carried him past, my answering stroke caught him fairly 'twixt wrist and elbow, and his cudgel spun harmlessly into the hedge; breathing curses, he sought to close with me but I, keeping my distance, smote him (very blithely) how and where I would until he (his arm useless) misliking my bludgeon-play and reading no mercy in my look, very wisely betook

him to his heels. Hereupon I turned to find the little peddler sitting astride his man's neck and his fist against the fellow's nose.

"Smell it, Job!" he was saying. "Smell it, lad; 't is the fist of a man as would be a-groping for your liver if it weren't for the respect I do bear your old mother — skin me else! So thank your old mother, lad, first as you've got a liver and second for a-saving o' that same liver. And now, get up, Job — begone Job, arter your pal and tell folk as kind Godby, though sore tempted, never so much as set finger on your liver and all along o' your good old mother — away wi' ye!" So the fellow got him to his legs (mighty rueful) and sped away after his comrade.

"Pal," said the little peddler, reaching out and grasping my hand, "here's full quittance for that pannikin o' water as you never got! And now — what's the word?"

"Now," said I, "let us go back and drink the good ale!"

"Pal," quoth the peddler, with a flash of white teeth, "wi' all my heart!"

Thus we presently returned to the little tavern and found there Roger the landlord, the rusty sword in one brawny fist, his wife holding fast to the other. At sight of us he dropped the weapon and roared joyously, and Cicely, running to us, clasped our hands in hearty welcome. So we sat down all four, and while we quaffed the ale, Godby described our late encounter with great exactness.

"Pal," said he thereafter, reaching across the table to grip my hand again, "what might your name be?"

"Martin."

"Why, then, Martin, have ye any friends or kin?"

"None!"

"No more have I, and look now, this Kent country is no fit place for you or me arter to-day! So what I says is, lets you and me pad it, pal — the road, lad — the good highroad, aha! How say ye, Martin?"

"No!"

"Why no, pal?"

"Because, after to-night, if I chance to be neither dead nor in prison, I 'm for shipboard."

"'T is an ill life, pal!"

"Why, life is an ill thing!" said I.

"Nay, look 'ee, Martin, life may be worth whiles now and then — aye, lad, there be times, good times."

"What times?"

"Well, Martin, to lie snug 'neath hedge o' star time, when your fire 's low an' the stars peep down through leaves at a man; wink, they go, and wink, wink, till, watching 'em, a man forgets his troubles awhile and knows something o' content. Aha, many 's the time o' star time they have winked me and my troubles asleep. Then there 's wakings o' bird time, wi' the sun up, dew a-sparkle and life calling within ye and without, and the birds — oh, the birds, Martin — a-filling the world wi' brave songs o' hope newborn like the day! Ah, many 's the morn the birds ha' waked me and I as merry as any grig — Lord love their beaks and wings! There 's hay-time o' the evening, full o' soft, sweet smells — aye, sweet as lad's first kiss; there 's wheat-time at noon wi' the ears a-rustle and the whitt-whitt o' scythe and whetstone; there 's night, Martin, and the long, black road dipping and a-winding but wi' the beam o' light beyond, lad — the good light as tells o' journey done, of companionship and welcomes and belike — eyes o' love, with —"

"Lusty ale!" quoth Roger, setting three new-filled pipkins before us. "And none better nor ourn."

"That I do swear to, Roger!" laughed the peddler. "Choke me else! But now, as to the sea, Martin pal — 't is a dog's life!"

"You know the sea, then?"

"Like my hand, Martin, and all along o' my father's godliness. A fine, big man he was and devout as he was lusty. Having begot me his next duty was to name me, and oh, pal, name me he did! A name as no raskell lad might live up to, a name as brought me into such troublous

faction ashore that he packed me off to sea. And if you ax me what name 't was, I 'll answer ye bold and true — 'God-be-here Jenkins, at your service, though Godby for short and 'twixt friends.' "

Now the more I saw of this little peddler the better I liked him, so that the hour was late when, having supped excellently well, I rose to take my leave.

"If you must be away, young master," said the buxom Cicely, "don't 'ee forget there be ever a welcome for 'ee at the Hoppole — eh, Roger?"

"There is so!" nodded the landlord. "Likewise a pipkin of ale and a bite and all gratus to a pal!"

"And look 'ee, Martin, my cove," quoth the peddler, grasping my hand, "there be ever and always the good highroad leading on and away to better things; so happen ye should change your mind, seek me here 'twixt this and dawn; if to-morrow, ye shall hear o' Godby at the Fox at Spelmonden. So luck go wi' ye, my bien cull."

"And you," says I, "should you be minded to sail with me, go to the Peck-o'-Malt at Bedgebury Cross; the word is 'The Faithful Friend' and ask for Adam Penfeather."

So I presently stepped forth of the little tavern where I had found such kindliness and, turning from the narrow lane, struck off across the fields.

It was a sweet, warm night, the moon not up as yet; thus as I went I lifted my gaze to the heavens where stars made a glory. And beholding these wondrous fires I needs must recall the little peddler's saying and ponder his "good times," — his "times of stars and birds, of noon and eventide, of welcomes sweet and eyes of love."

And now I was of a sudden filled with a great yearning and passionate desire that I too might know such times. But, as I climbed a stile, my hand by chance came upon the knife at my girdle and sitting on the stile I drew it forth and fell to handling its broad blade and, doing so, knew in my heart that such times were not for me, nor ever could be. And sitting there, knife in hand, desire and yearning were lost and 'whelmed in fierce and black despair.

CHAPTER VIII

How I Had Word With the Lady Joan Brandon for the Third Time

The moon was well up when, striking out from the gloom of the woods, I reached a wall very high and strong, whereon moss and lichens grew; skirting this, I presently espied that I sought, — a place where the coping was gone with sundry of the bricks, making here a gap very apt to escalade; and here, years agone, I had been wont to climb this wall to the furtherance of some boyish prank on many a night such as this. Awhile stood I staring up at this gap, then, seizing hold of mossy brickwork, I drew myself up and dropped into a walled garden. Here were beds of herbs well tended and orderly and, as I went, I breathed an air sweet with the smell of thyme and lavender and a thousand other scents, — an air fraught with memories of sunny days and joyous youth, insomuch that I clenched my hands and hasted from the place. Past sombre trees, mighty of girth and branch, I hurried; past still pools, full of a moony radiance, where lilies floated; past marble fauns and dryads that peeped ghost-like from leafy solitudes; past sundial and carven bench, by clipped yew hedges and winding walks until, screened in shadow, I paused to look upon a great and goodly house; and as I stood there viewing it over from terrace walk to gabled roof, I heard a distant clock chime ten.

The great house lay very silent and dark; not a light showed save in one lower chamber. So I waited patiently, my gaze on this light while, ever and anon, the leaves about me stirred in the soft night wind with a sound like one that sighed mournfully.

Thus stayed I some while; howbeit, the light yet aglow and my patience waning, I stole forward, keeping ever in the shadows, and, ascending the terrace, came where grew ivy, very thick and gnarled, overspreading this wing of the house. Groping amid the leaves I found that I sought, a stout staple deep-driven between the bricks with above this another and yet others again, the which formed a sort of ladder whereby, as a boy, I had been wont to come and go by night or day as I listed.

Forthwith I began to climb by means of these staples and the ivy, until at last my fingers grasped the stone sill of a window; and now, the lattice being open, I contrived (albeit with much ado) to clamber into the room. It was a fair-sized chamber, and the moonlight, falling athwart the floor, lit upon a great carven bed brave with tapestried hangings. Just now the silken curtains were updrawn, and upon the bed I saw a bundle of garments all ribands, laces and the like, the which, of themselves, gave me sudden pause. From these my gaze wandered to where, against the panelling, hung a goodly rapier complete with girdle and slings, its silver hilt, its guards and curling quillons bright in the moonbeams. So came I and, reaching it down, drew it from the scabbard and saw the blade very bright as it had been well cared for. And graven on the forte of the blade was the Conisby blazon and the legend:

ROUSE ME NOT

Now as I stood watching the moonbeams play up and down the long blade, I heard the light, quick tread of feet ascending the stairs without, and a voice (very rich and sweetly melodious) that brake out a-singing, and the words it sang, these:

"A poor soul sat sighing by a green willow tree
With hand on his bosom, his head on his knee
Sighing willow! Willow, willow!
O willow, willow, willow,
And O the green willow my garland shall be."

Nearer came the singing while I stood, sword in hand, waiting; the song ended suddenly, and a sweet voice called:

"Oh, Marjorie, wake me betimes; I must be abroad with the sun to-morrow — good night, sweet wench!"

I crouched in the curtains of the great bed as the latch clicked and the room filled with the soft glow of a candle; a moment's silence, then:

"Oh, Marjorie, I'll wear the green taffety in the morning. Nay indeed, I'll be my own tirewoman to-night."

The light was borne across the room; then, coming softly to the door, I closed it and, setting my back against it, leaned there. At the small sound I made she turned and, beholding me, shrank back, and I saw the candlestick shaking in her hand ere she set it down upon the carved press beside her.

"Who is it — who is it?" she questioned breathlessly, staring at my bruised and swollen features.

"A rogue you had dragged lifeless to the pillory!"

"You?" she breathed. "You! And they set you in the pillory? 'Twas by no order of me."

"'Tis no matter, lady, here was just reward for a rogue," says I. "But now I seek Sir Richard —"

"Nay, indeed — indeed you shall not find him here."

"That will I prove for myself!" said I and laid hand on latch.

"Sir," replied she in the same breathless fashion, "why will you not believe me? Seek him an you will, but I tell you Sir Richard sailed into the Spanish Main two years since and was lost."

"Lost?" said I, feeling a tremor of apprehension shake me as I met her truthful eyes. "Lost, say you — how lost?"

"He and his ship were taken by the Spaniards off Hispaniola."

"Taken?" I repeated, like one sore mazed. "Taken — off — Hispaniola?" And here, bethinking me of the cruel mockery of it all (should this indeed be so) black anger

seized me. "You lie to me!" I cried. "Ha, by God, you lie! An there be aught of justice in heaven then Richard Brandon must be here."

"Who are you?" she questioned, viewing me with the same wide-eyed stare. "Who are you — so fierce, so young, yet with whitened hair, and that trembles at the truth? Who are you? Speak!"

"You have lied to save him from me!" I cried. "You lie — ha, confess!" And I strode towards her, the long blade a-glitter in my quivering grasp.

"Would you kill me?" asked she, all unflinching and with eyes that never wavered. "Would you murder a helpless maid — Martin Conisby?" The rapier fell to the rug at my feet and lay there, my breath caught, and thus we stood a while, staring into each other's eyes.

"Martin Conisby is dead!" said I at last.

For answer she pointed to the wall above my head and, looking thither, I saw the picture of a young cavalier, richly habited, who smiled down, grey-eyed and gentle-lipped, all care-free youth and gaiety; and beneath this portrait ran the words:

MARTIN CONISBY, LORD WENDOVER. Aetat 21.

"Madam," quoth I at last, turning my back on the picture, "yon innocent was whipped to death aboard a Spanish galleass years since, wherefore I, a poor rogue, come seeking his destroyer."

"Sir," said she, clasping her hands and viewing me with troubled eyes, "oh, sir — whom mean you?"

"One who, having slain the father, sold the son into slavery, to the hell of Spanish dungeon and rowing-bench, to stripes and shame and torment — one the just God hath promised to my vengeance — I mean Richard Brandon."

"Ah — mercy of God — my father! Ah, no, no — it cannot be! My father? Sure here is some black mistake."

"Being his daughter you should know 't is very truth! Being a Brandon you must know of the feud hath cursed

and rent our families time out of mind, the bitter faction and bloodshed!"

"Aye!" she murmured. "This I do know."

"Well, madam, five years agone, or thereabouts, my father, falsely attainted of treason, died in his prison and I, drugged and trepanned aboard ship, was sold into the plantations, whence few return — and Richard Brandon, enriched by our loss and great at court, dreamed he had made an end o' the Conisbys and that the feud was ended once and for all."

"My lord," said she, proud head upflung, "I deny all this! Such suspicion, so base and unfounded, shameth but yourself. You have dared force your way into my house at dead of night and now — oh, now you would traduce my absent father, charging him with shameful crimes — and this to me, his daughter! Enough, I'll hear no more; begone ere I summon my servants and have you driven forth!" and, seizing the bell rope that hung against the panelling, she faced me, her deep bosom heaving tempestuous, white hands clenched and scorning me with her eyes.

"Ring!" said I, and seated myself in a chair beside her great bed.

"Have you no shame?"

"None, madam; 't was all whipped out o' me aboard the *Esmeralda* galleass. Ring, madam! But I go not from this place till I learn, once and for all, if Sir Richard be here or no."

Now at this she loosed the bell rope very suddenly and, covering her face with her hands, stood thus awhile.

"God pity me!" said she at last in weeping voice. "I may not forget how you saved me from —" Here a tremor seemed to shake her: then she spoke again, yet now scarce above a whisper. "Your face hath looked upon me night and morn these two years and now — oh, Martin Conisby, were you but the man I dreamed you!"

"I 'm a rogue new-broke from slavery!" replied I.

"Aye," she cried suddenly, lifting her head and viewing

me with new and bitter scorn, "and one that speaketh lies of an absent man!"

"Lies!" quoth I, choking on the word. "Lies, madam? Why, then, how cometh my picture here — my coat of arms above the mantel yonder — the Conisby 'scutcheon on your gates? What do *you* at Conisby Shene?"

Now in her look I saw a sudden doubt, a growing dread, her breath caught, and she shrank back to the panelled wall and leaned there, and ever the trouble in her eyes grew. "Well?" I questioned. "Have ye no answer?"

"'T was said — I have heard — the Conisbys were no more."

"Even so, how came Sir Richard by this, our house?"

"Nay — nay, I — I know little of my father's business — he was ever a silent man and I — have passed my days in London or abroad — But you — ah, tell me — why seek you my father?"

"That is betwixt him and me!"

"Was it — murder? Was it vengeance, my lord?" Here, as I made no answer, she crossed over to me and laid one slender hand on my shoulder; whereat I would have risen but her touch stayed me. "Speak!" said she in a whisper. "Was it his life you sought?" Meeting the look in her deep, soft eyes, I was silent for a while, finding no word, then dumbly I nodded. And now I felt her hand trembling on my shoulder ere it was withdrawn and, looking up, I saw she had clasped her hands and stood with head bowed like one in prayer. "Oh, Martin Conisby," she whispered, "now thank God that in His mercy He hath stayed thee from murder!" So she stood awhile then, crossing to the carven press, took thence divers papers and set them before me. "Read!" she commanded.

So I examined these papers and found therein indisputable evidence that my journey here was vain indeed, that Sir Richard, sailing westward, had been taken by Spaniards off Hispaniola and carried away prisoner, none knew whither.

And, in a while, having read these papers, I laid them by and rising, stumbled towards the open casement.

"Well, my lord?" said she in strange, breathless fashion. "And what now?"

"Why now," replied I wearily, "it seems my vengeance is yet to seek."

"Vengeance?" she cried. "Ah, God pity thee! Doth life hold for thee nought better?"

"Nought!"

"Vengeance is a consuming fire!"

"So seek I vengeance!"

"Oh, Martin Conisby, bethink you! Vengeance is but a sickness of the mind — a wasting disease — "

"So seek I vengeance!"

"For him that questeth after vengeance this fair world can hold nought beside."

"So give me vengeance; nought else seek I of this world!"

"Ah, poor soul — poor man that might be, so do I pity thee!"

"I seek no man's pity."

"But I am a woman, so shall I pity thee alway!"

Now as I prepared to climb through the lattice she, beholding the sword where it yet lay, stooped and, taking it up, sheathed it. "This was thine own once, I've heard," says she; "take it, Martin Conisby, keep it clean, free from dishonour and leave thy vengeance to God."

"Not so!" answered I, shaking my head. "I have my knife; 't is weapon better suited to my rags!" So saying, I clambered out through the lattice even as I had come. Being upon the terrace, I glanced up to find her leaning to watch me and with the moon bright on her face.

"Live you for nought but vengeance?" she questioned softly.

"So aid me God!" says I.

"So shall I pity thee alway, Martin Conisby!" she repeated, and sighed and so was gone.

Then I turned, slow of foot, and went my solitary way.

CHAPTER IX

How I Swore the Blood-Brotherhood

I remember the moon was very bright as, reaching the end of a grassy lane (or rather cart track), I saw before me a small, snug-seeming tavern with a board over the door whereon were the words:

Y^e^ PECK OF MALT
By
JOEL BYM.

And looking the place over, from trim, white steps before the door to trim thatched roof, I marvelled at its air of prosperity; for here it stood, so far removed from road and bye-road, so apparently away from all habitation, and so lost and hid by trees (it standing within a little copse) that it was great wonder any customer should ever find his way hither.

The place was very quiet; not a light showed anywhere and the door was fast shut, which was nothing strange, for the hour was late. Stepping up to the door I knocked loudly thereon with my cudgel, at first without effect but, having repeated the summons, a voice from within hailed me gruffly:

"Who knocks?"

"'The faithful friend'!" answered I. At this, the door swung suddenly open and a lanthorn was thrust into my face, whereupon I fell back a step, dazzled; then gradually, beyond this glare, I made out a dark shape blocking the doorway, a great fellow, so prodigiously hairy of head and face that little was there to see of features save two round eyes and a great, hooked nose.

"And who d' ye seek, Faithful Friend?"

"Master Adam Penfeather."

"Why, then, Faithful Friend, heave ahead!" said he, and, making way for me to enter, closed the door (the which I noticed was mighty stout and strong) and, having locked and bolted it, barred it with a stout iron set into massy sockets in either wall.

"You go mighty secure!" said I.

"Cock," quoth the giant, eyeing me over slowly, "cock, be ye a cackler? Because if so be you do cackle overly, here's we as won't love ye no whit, my cock."

"Good!" said I, returning his look; "I seek no man's love!"

"Cock," quoth he, plunging huge fist into his beard and giving it a tug, "I begin to love ye better nor I thought! This way, cock!" Herewith he led me along a wide, flagged passage and up a broad stair with massy, carven handrail; and as I went I saw the place was much bigger than I had deemed it; the walls, too, were panelled, and I judged it had once formed part of a noble house. At last we reached the door whereon the fellow knocked softly and so presently ushered me into a fair chamber lit by wax candles; and here, seated at a table with papers before him and a pen in his fingers, sat Master Adam Penfeather.

"Ha, shipmate," said he, motioning to a chair, "you be something earlier than I expected; suffer me to make an end o' this business — sit ye, comrade, sit! As for you, Bo's'n, have up a flask o' the Spanish wine — the black seal!"

"Aye, Cap'n!" and, seizing a fistful of hair above his eyebrow, the fellow strode away, closing the door behind him.

Now beholding Penfeather as he bent to his writing — the lean, aquiline face of him so smooth and youthful in contrast to his silver hair — I was struck by his changed look; indeed he seemed some bookish student rather than the lawless rover I had thought him, despite the pistols

at his elbow and the long rapier that dangled at his chair back; moreover there was about him also an air of latent power I had not noticed ere this.

At length, having made an end of his writing, he got up and stretched himself.

"So, shipmate, art ready to swear the blood-fellowship wi' me?"

"Aye!" answered I. "When do we sail?" At this he glanced at me swiftly from the corners of his eyes.

"So ho!" he murmured, pinching his chin. "The wind 's changed, it seems; you grow eager — and wherefore?"

"'T is no matter!"

"Shipmate," said he, shaking his head, "an we sail as brothers and comrades there must be never a secret betwixt us — speak!"

"As ye will!" quoth I, leaning back in my chair. "I learn then you are sailing as master in a ship bound for the Main in quest of Sir Richard Brandon lost off Hispaniola two years agone. Sir Richard Brandon is the man I have sought ever since I broke out of the hell he sold me into. Now look 'ee, Adam Penfeather," said I, springing to my feet and grasping his arm, "look 'ee now — put me in the way of meeting this man, aid me to get my hand on this man, and I am yours — aye, body and soul — to the end o' things, and this I swear!"

While I spake thus, my voice hoarse with passion, my fingers clutching his arm, Penfeather stood pinching his chin and watching me beneath his black brows; when I had ended he turned and fell a-pacing to and fro across the room as it had been the narrow poop of a ship.

"Ah — I know you now, my lord!" said he, pausing suddenly before me. "As the sailorman who watched you as you lay a-groaning in your sleep outside the Conisby Arms, I guessed you one o' the Conisby breed by your ring, and as one born and bred here in Kent I mind well the adage 'To hate like a Brandon and revenge like a Conisby,' and by God, my Lord, you are a true Conisby, it

seemeth! Vengeance!" says he, his thin features grown sharp and austere. "Ah! I have seen much and overmuch of it aboard lawless craft and among the wild islands of the Caribbees. I have seen the devilish cruelties of Spaniard, Portugal and the red horrors of Indian vengeance — but, for cold, merciless ferocity, for the vengeance that dieth not, biding its time and battening on poisonous hate, it needeth your man o' noble birth, your gentleman o' quality!"

Here he turned his back and paced slowly to the end of the room; when he faced me again his austere look was gone and in its stead was the grimly whimsical expression of the mariner, as I had seen him first.

"Damme!" said I, scowling. "Was it to read me homilies you had me here?"

"Aha, shipmate," answered he with rueful smile, "there spake the young divine, the excellent divinity student who committed a peccadillo long years agone and sailing to the Golden West gave place to one Adam Penfeather, a sailorman — as you shall hear tell of at St. Kitt's, Tortuga, Santa Catalina and a score o' places along the Main. As to yourself, shipmate, if 't is only vengeance ye seek, vengeance let it be, though, when all 's done, 't is but wind — hist! Here cometh the Bo'sun — come in, Jo lad, come in! 'T was trusty Joel Bym here gave me my first lesson in navigation — eh, Joe?"

"Aye, Cap'n," growled the hairy giant, "by cock, them was the days, a fair wind, a quick eye an' no favour; aye, them was the days, by cock's body!" So saying, he placed a flask of wine on the table together with a curious silver cup and (at a sign from Penfeather) left us together.

"And now, comrade," said Penfeather, filling the goblet, "draw up your chair and do as I do."

And now as we sat facing each other (across the table) Penfeather turns back his left sleeve and whipping out a knife, nicked himself therewith on the wrist and squeezed thence a few drops of blood into the wine; which done, he

passed the knife to me and I (though misliking the extravagance of the thing) nevertheless did the same.

"Martin," said he, "give me your hand — so! Now swear as I do!" And thus, clasping each other's hands, we swore the oath of blood-brotherhood; and this as followeth, viz:

1. To keep ever each other's counsel.
2. To aid each other in all things against all men soever.
3. To cherish and comfort each other in every adversity.
4. To be faithful each to each unto the death.

Thereafter, at his command, I drank the wine wherein our blood was mingled, and he did the like.

"And now," said he, leaning back in his chair and viewing me with his pensive smile, "since we be brothers and comrades sworn, how d' ye like me now?"

"Better than I did," said I, speaking on impulse, "for sure you are the strangest picaroon that ever cheated the gallows."

"Ah," said he, pinching his chin, "an I am neither hanged nor murdered, you shall one day find me a worshipful magistrate, Martin, Justice o' the Peace and *quorum* — *custos rotulorum* and the rest on 't, there my ambition lies. As for you, Martin, Lord Wendover, there is your enemy, ha? Bloody vengeance and murder and what beside?"

"That is mine own concern!" I retorted angrily. "And look 'ee, since comrades we are, you will forget who and what I am!"

"Why, so I have, Martin, so I have. Art a poor, destitute rogue that might be a man and rich, but for this vengeful maggot i' thy brain. Howbeit, thou 'rt my comrade sworn and brother-in-arms, and as such I shall trust thee — to the death, Martin."

"And shall find me worthy, Adam — despite thy curst tongue."

"Death is an ill thing, Martin!"

"Is it?" said I, and laughed.

"Aye," he nodded, "an ill thing to him that hath

ambitions above the brute. See here!" Unbuttoning his doublet he showed me a shirt of fine chain mail beneath his linen. "'T will turn any point ever forged and stop a bullet handsomely, as I do know."

"Why, sure," said I, a little scornful, "you avowed yourself a cautious man—"

"True, Martin, I have another shirt the like o' this for you. And as for caution, I have need, d' ye see, comrade. The arrow that flieth by day is an ill enough thing, but the knife that stabbeth i' the dark is worse. This shirt hath turned death thrice already—once i' the breast here and twice 'twixt the shoulders. I am a man marked for death, Martin, murder creepeth at my heels, it hath dogged me overseas and found me here in Kent at last, it seems. And, comrade, henceforth the steel that smiteth me shall smite you also, belike."

"And why is your life sought thus?"

"By reason of a secret I bear about me; wherefore (saving only my good friend Nicholas Frant who——perished) I have ever been a solitary man walking alone and distrustful of my fellows. For, Martin, I have here the secret of a treasure that hath been the dream and hope of roving adventurers along the Main this many a year—a treasure beyond price. Men have sought it vainly, have striven and fought, suffered and died for it; have endured plague, battle, shipwreck, famine; have died screaming 'neath Indian tortures, languished in Spanish dungeon and slaveship and all for sake of Bartlemy's Treasure. And of those that ever sought it but one man hath ever seen this treasure, and I am that man, Martin. And this treasure is so marvellous well hid that without me it shall lie unfound till the trump of doom. But now, since we are brethren and comrades, needs must I share with thee the treasure and the secret of it—"

"No, no, Adam! Keep it to yourself, I 'll none of it."

"Share and share!" said he. "'T is the law of the Coast—"

"None the less I want nought of it."

"'T is the law," he repeated, "and moreover with such vast wealth a man shall buy him anything in this world — even vengeance, Martin. Look 'ee now, here's the secret of our treasure." Hereupon he thrust his hand into his breast and drew out a small oilskin packet or bag, suspended about his lean throat by a thin steel chain, and from this he drew forth a small roll of parchment.

"Here 't is, Martin," he said softly, "here's that so many lusty men have perished for — not much to look at, shipmate, torn, d' ye see, and stained, but here's wealth, Martin, fame, honours, all the vices and all the evils and chief among 'em — vengeance!"

So saying, he unrolled the small scrap of parchment and holding it before me, I saw: it was a rough chart.

"Take it, Martin, and study it the while I tell you my story."

CHAPTER X

Adam Penfeather, His Narrative

"Mine is a strange, wild story, Martin, but needs must I tell it and in few words as may be. Fifteen years agone (or thereabouts) I became one of that league known as the Brotherhood of the Coast and swore comradeship with one Nicholas Frant, a Kent man, even as I. Now though I was full young and a cautious man, yet, having a natural hatred of Spaniards and their ways, I wrought right well against them and was mighty diligent in many desperate affrays against their ships and along the Coast. 'T was I (and my good comrade, Nick Frant) with sixteen lusty lads took sea in an open pinnace and captured the great treasure galleon *Dolores del Principe* off Carthagena, and what with all this, Martin, and my being blessed with some education and a gift of adding two and two together, I got me rapid advancement in the Brotherhood until — well, shipmate, I that am poor and solitary was once rich and with nigh a thousand bully fellows at command.' And then it was that I fell in with that arch-devil, that master rogue whose deeds had long been a terror throughout the Main, a fellow more bloody than any Spaniard, more treacherous than any Portugal, and more cruel than any Indian-Inca, Mosquito, Maya or Aztec, and this man an Englishman, and one of birth and breeding, who hid his identity under the name of Bartlemy. I met him first in Tortuga where we o' the Brotherhood lay, six stout ships and nigh four hundred men convened for an expedition against Santa Catalina and this for two reasons; first, because 't was a notable rich city, and second, to rescue certain of the Brotherhood that lay there waiting to be burnt at the next auto-da-fé. Well, Martin, 't is

upon a certain evening that this Bartlemy comes aboard my ship and with him his mate, by name Tressady. And never was greater difference than 'twixt these two, Tressady being a great, wild fellow with a steel hook in place of his left hand, d'ye see, and Bartlemy a slender, dainty-seeming, fiendly-smiling gentleman, very nice as to speech and deportment and clad in the latest mode, from curling periwig to jewelled shoe buckles.

"'Captain Penfeather,' says he, 'your most dutiful, humble — ha, let me perish but here is curst reek o' tar!' with which, Martin, he claps a jewelled pomander to the delicate nose of him. 'You 've heard of me, I think, Captain,' says he, 'and of my ship, yonder, *The Ladies' Delight?*' I told him I had, Martin, bluntly and to the point, whereat he laughs and bows and forthwith proffers to aid us against Santa Catalina, the which I refused forthwith. But my council of captains, seeing his ship was larger than any we possessed and exceeding well armed and manned, overruled me, and the end of it was we sailed, six ships of the Brotherhood and this accursed pirate.

"Well, Martin, Santa Catalina fell according to my plans and, the Governor and Council agreeing to pay ransom, I drew off my companies and camped outside the walls of the town till they should collect the money. Now the women of this place were exceeding comely, Martin, in especial the Governor's lady, and upon the second night was sudden outcry and uproar within the city. Whereupon I marched into the place forthwith and found this curst Bartlemy and his rogues, grown impatient, were at their devil's work. Hasting to the Governor's house, I found it gutted and him dragged from his bed and with the life gashed out of him — aye, Martin, torn body and throat, d'ye see, as by the fangs of some great beast! That was the first time I saw what a steel hook may do! As for this poor gentleman's lady, she was gone. Hereupon, we o' the Brotherhood fell upon these pirate rogues and fought them by light o' the blazing houses (for they

had fired the city) and I, thus espying the devil Bartlemy, met him point to point. He was very full o' rapier tricks, but so was I, Martin (also I was younger) and winged him sore and had surely ended him, but that Tressady and divers others got him away and what with the dark night and the woods that lie shorewards he, together with some few of his crew, got them back aboard his ship, *The Ladies' Delight* and so away, but twelve of his rogues we took (beyond divers we slew in fight) and those twelve I saw hanged that same hour. A week later we sailed for Tortuga with no less than ninety and one thousand pieces of eight for our labour, but I and those with me never had the spending of a single piece, Martin, for we ran into a storm such as I never saw the like of even in those seas. Well, we ran afore it for three days, and its fury nothing abating all this time, I never quit the deck; but I had been wounded and on the third night, being fevered and outworn, turned in below. I was awakened by Nick Frant roaring in my ear, for the tempest was very loud and fierce:

"'Adam,' cried he, 'we're lost, every soul and the good money! We've struck a reef, Adam, and 't is the end, and a' of the good money!' Hereupon I climbed 'bove deck, the vessel on her beam ends and in desperate plight, and nought to be seen i' the dark save the white spume as the seas broke over us. None the less I set the crew to cutting away her masts and heaving the ordnance overboard (to lighten her thereby), but while this was doing comes a great wave roaring out of the dark and, dashing aboard us, whirled me up and away and I, borne aloft on that mighty, hissing sea, strove no more, doubting not my course was run. So, blinded, choking, I was borne aloft and then, Martin, found myself adrift in water calm as any mill pond — a small lagoon — and, spying through the dark a grove of palmetto trees, presently managed to climb ashore, more dead than alive. Lying there, I prayed — a thing I had not done for many a year. As the dawn came I saw the great wave had hurled me over

the barrier reef into this small lagoon, and beyond the reef lay all that remained of my good ship.

"I was yet viewing this dolorous sight (and much cast down for the loss of my companions, in especial my sworn friend Nicholas Frant) when I heard a sound behind me and, turning about, espied a woman, and in this woman's face (fair though it was) I read horror and sadness beyond tears, and yet I knew her, for the same had been wife to the murdered governor of Santa Catalina.

"'Go back!' says she in Spanish, pointing to the surf that thundered beyond the reef. 'Go back! Here is the devil — the sea hath more mercy — go back whiles ye may!' And now she checked all at once and falls a-shivering, for a voice reached us, a man's voice a-singing fair to hear and the song he sang was this,

> 'Hey cheerly O and cheerly O
> And cheerly come sing O
> While at the mainyard to and fro —'

and knowing this voice (to my cost) I looked around for some weapon, since I had none and was all but naked, and whipping up a jagged and serviceable stone, stood awaiting him with this in my fist. And down the beach he comes, jocund and debonair in his finery, albeit something pale by reason of excess and my rapier work. And now I come to look at you, Martin, he was just such another as you as to face and feature, though lacking your beef and bone. Now he, beholding me where I stood, flourishes off his be-laced hat and, making me a bow, comes on smiling.

"'Ah,' says he gaily, ''t is Captain Penfeather of the Brotherhood, a-colloguing with my latest wife! Is she not a pearl o' dainty woman-ware, Captain, a sweet and luscious piece, a passionate, proud beauty worth the taming — ha, Captain? And she is tamed, see you. To your dainty knees, wench — down!'

"Now though he smiled yet and spake her gentle, she, bowing proud head, sank to her knees, crouching on the ground before him, while he looked down on her, the devil

in his eyes and his jewelled fingers toying with the dagger in his girdle, a strange dagger with a hilt wrought very artificially in the shape of a naked woman — "

"How," asked I, leaning across the table, "a woman, Penfeather?"

"Aye, shipmate! So I stood mighty alert, my eyes on this dagger, being minded to whip it into his rogue's heart as chance might offer. 'I wonder,' says he to this poor lady, 'I wonder how long I shall keep thee, madonna, a week — a month — a year? Venus knoweth, for you amuse me, sweet — Rise, rise, dear my lady, my Dolores of Joy, rise and aid me with thy counsel, for here hath this misfortunate clumsy Captain fool blundered into our amorous paradise, this tender Cyprian isle sacred to our passion. Yet here is he profaning our joys with his base material presence. How then shall we rid ourselves of this offence? The knife — this lover o' men of mine? The bullet? Yet 'tis a poor small naked rogue, and in two days cometh my *Ladies' Delight* and Tressady with his hook — see, my Dolores, for two days he shall be our slave and thereafter, for thy joy, shall show thee how to die, my sweet — torn 'twixt pimento trees or Tressady's hook — thou shalt choose the manner of 't. And now, unveil, unveil, my goddess of the isle — so shall — ' Ha, Martin! My stone took him 'neath the ear, and as he swayed reeling to the blow, lithe and swift as any panther this tortured woman sprang, and I saw the flash of steel ere it was buried in his breast. Even then he did n't fall, but, staggering to a pimento tree, leans him there and falls a-laughing, a strange, high-pitched, gasping laugh, and as he laughed thus, I saw the silver haft of the dagger that was a woman leap and quiver in his breast. Then, laughing yet, he, never heeding me, plucked and levelled sudden pistol, and when the smoke cleared the brave Spanish lady lay dead upon the sands.

"'A noble piece, Captain,' says he, gasping for breath, and then to her, 'Art gone, my goddess — I — follow thee!' And now he sinks to his knees and begins to crawl

where she lay, but getting no further than her feet (by reason of his faintness) he clasps her feet and kisses them, and laying his head upon them — closes his eyes. 'Penfeather!' he groans, 'my treasure — hidden — dagger —'

"Then I came very hastily and raised his head (for I had oft heard talk o' this treasure) and in that moment he died. So I left them lying and coming to the seaboard sat there a great while, watching the break o' the seas on what was left o' the wreck, yet seeing it not. I sat there till noon, Martin, until, driven by thirst and hunger and heat of sun, I set off to seek their habitation, for by their looks I judged them well-fed and housed. But, and here was the marvel, Martin, seek how I might I found no sign of any hut or shelter save that afforded by nature (as caves and trees) and was forced to satisfy my cravings with such fruits as flourished in profusion, for this island, Martin, is a very earthly paradise.

"That night, the moon being high and bright, I came to that stretch of silver sand beside the lagoon where they lay together rigid and pale and, though I had no other tool but his dagger and a piece o' driftwood, made shift to bury them 'neath the great pimento tree that stood beside the rock, and both in the same grave. Which done, I betook me to a dry cave hard by a notable fall of water that plungeth into a lake and there passed the night. Next day, having explored the island very thoroughly and dined as best I might on shell fish that do abound, I sat me down where I might behold the sea and fell to viewing of this silver-hilted dagger —"

"The which was shaped like to a woman?" asked I.

"Aye, Martin. And now, bethinking me of Bartlemy's dying words anent this same dagger, and of the tales I had heard full oft along the Main regarding this same Bartlemy and his hidden treasure, I fell to handling this dagger, turning and twisting it this way and that. And suddenly, shipmate, I felt the head turn upon the shoulders 'twixt the clasping hands; turn and turn until it came away and showed a cavity, and in this cavity a roll of

parchment and that parchment none other than this map with the cryptogram the which I could make nought of.

"Now as I sat thus, studying this meaningless jumble of words, I of a sudden espied a man below me on the reef, a wild, storm-tossed figure, his scanty clothing all shreds and tatters, and as he went seeking of shellfish that were plenteous enough, I knew him for my sworn comrade Nick Frant. And then, Martin, I did a strange thing, for, blood-brothers though we were, I made haste (and all of a tremble) to slip back this map into its hiding place, which done I arose, hailing my comrade, and went to meet him joyously enough. And no two men in the world more rejoiced than we, as we clasped hands and embraced each other as only comrades may. It seemed the hugeous sea that had caught me had caught him likewise and hurled him, sore bruised, some miles to the south of the reef. So now I told him of the deaths of Bartlemy and the poor lady, yet Martin (and this was strange) I spoke nothing of knife or treasure; I told him of the expectation I had of the pirate ship's return, and yet I never once spake o' the map and chart. And methinks the secret cast a shadow betwixt us that grew ever deeper, for as the days passed and no sail appeared, there came a strangeness, an unlove betwixt us that grew until one day we fell to open quarrel, disputation and deadly strife, and the matter no more than a dead man's shirt (and that ragged) that had come ashore.

"And we (being in rags and the sun scorching) each claimed this shirt, and from words came blows. He had his seaman's knife and I Bartlemy's accursed dagger, and so we fought after the manner of the buccaneers, his leg bound fast to mine and, Martin, though he was a great fellow and strong and wounded me sore, in the end I got in a thrust under the armpit, and he fell a-dying and I with him. Then I (seeing death in his eyes, Martin) clasped him in my arms and kissed him and besought him not to die, whereat he smiled. 'Adam!' says he, 'why, Adam, lad—' and so died.

"Then I took that accursed dagger, wet with my comrade's life blood, and hurled it from me, and so with many tears and lamentations I presently buried poor Nick Frant in the sands and lay there face down upon his grave, wetting it with my tears and groaning there till nightfall. But all next day, Martin (though my heart yearned to my slain friend), all next day I spent seeking and searching for the dagger that had killed him. And as the sun set, I found it. Thereafter I passed my days (since the pirate ship came not, doubtless owing to the late tempest) studying the writing on the chart here, yet came no nearer a solution, though my imagination was inflamed by mention of diamonds, rubies and pearls as ye may see written here for yourself. So the time passed till one day at dawn I beheld a great ship, her mizzen and fore-topmasts gone, standing in for my island, and as she drew nearer, I knew her at last for that accursed pirate ship called *Ladies' Delight*. Being come to anchor within some half-mile or so, I saw a boat put off for the reef and, lying well hid, I watched this boat, steered by a knowing hand, pass through the reef by a narrow channel and so enter the lagoon. Now in this boat were six men and at the rudder sat Tressady, and I saw his hook flash in the sun as he sprang ashore. Having beached their boat, they fell to letting off their calivers and pistols and hallooing:

"'Oho, Captain!' they roared. 'Bartlemy, ahoy!' And this outcry maintained they for some while. But none appearing to answer, they seemed to take counsel together and thereafter set off three and three, shouting as they went. And now it seemed they knew no more of Bartlemy's hiding place than I, whereat I rejoiced greatly. So lay I all that forenoon watching their motions and hearing their outcries now here, now there, until, marvelling at the absence of Bartlemy, they sat down all six upon the spit of sand whereby I lay hid and fell to eating and drinking, talking the while, though too low for me to hear what passed. But all at once they seemed to fall to disputation, Tressady and a small, dark fellow against

the four, and thereafter to brawl and fight, though this was more butchery than fight, Martin, for Tressady shoots down two ere they can rise and, leaping up, falls on other two with his hook — ! So with aid from the small, dark fellow they soon have made an end o' their four companions and, leaving them lying, come up the beach and sitting below the ledge of rock whereon I lay snug hidden, fell to talk.

"'So Ben, *comarado mio*, we be committed to it now! Since these four be dead and all men well-loved by Bartlemy, needs must Bartlemy follow 'em!'

"'Aye!' says the man Ben, 'when we have found him. Though Bartlemy's a fighting man!'

"'And being a man can die, Ben. And he once dead, we stand his heirs — you and I, Ben, I and you!'

"'Well and good!' says Ben. 'But for this treasure, where lieth it and for that matter, Roger, where is Bartlemy?'

"'Both to find, Ben, so let us set about it forthwith.' The which they did, Martin; for three days they sought the island over and I watching 'em. On the third day, as they are sitting 'neath the great pimento tree I have mentioned (and I watching close by), Tressady sits up all at once.

"'Ben!' says he, 'what be yon?' and he pointed to a mound of sand hard by.

"'Lord knoweth!' says Ben.

"'Yon's been digging,' says Tressady, 'and none so long since!'

"'Aye,' said Ben, 'and now what?'

"'Now,' says Tressady, 'let us dig likewise.'

"'Aye, but what with?' says Ben.

"'Our fingers!' says Tressady. So there and then they fell to digging, casting up the loose sand with their two hands, dog-fashion and I, watching, turned my head that I might not see.

"'Ha!' says Tressady, in a while, 'here is foul reek, Ben, foul reek.'

"'Right curst!' says Ben and then uttered a great, hoarse cry. And I, knowing what they had come upon, kept my face turned away. ''T is she!' whispers Ben.

"'Aye, and him!' says Tressady. 'Faugh! Man, 't is ill thing, but needs must — his dagger, Ben, his dagger.'

"'Here 's no dagger,' says Ben. 'Here 's empty sheath but no steel in 't!'

"''T is fallen out!' says Tressady in strangled voice. 'Seek, Ben, seek!' So despite the horror of the thing, they sought, Martin; violating death and careless of corruption they sought, and all the time the thing they sought was quivering in this right hand.

"'Ben,' says Tressady when they were done, 'Ben — how came he dead — how?'

"'Who shall say, Roger? Mayhap they did each other's business.'

"'Why, then — where 's the dagger o' the woman — the silver goddess — where? And how came they buried?'

"'Aye, there 's the rub, Roger!'

"'Why,' says Tressady, 'look 'ee, Ben, 't is in my mind we 're not alone on this island —'

"'And who should be here, Roger?'

"'The man that slew our Captain!' Here there was silence awhile; then the man Ben rose and spat.

"'Faugh!' says he. 'Come away, Roger, ere I stifle — come, i' the devil's name!' So they went and I lying hid secure watched them out of sight.

"Now when they were gone I took counsel with myself, for here were two desperate, bloody rogues very well armed, and here was I a solitary man with nought to my defence save for Nick's knife and the silver-hilted dagger which was heavy odds, Martin, as you 'll agree. Now I have ever accounted myself a something timid man, wherefore in cases of desperate need and danger I have been wont to rely on my wit rather than weapons, on head rather than hands. So now as I looked upon this cursed dagger wherewith I had slain my poor friend, be-

holding this evil silver woman whose smile seemed verily to allure men to strife and bloodshed, the end of it was I stole from my lurking place and set the dagger amid the gnarled roots of the great pimento tree where it might have slipped from dying fingers, and so got me back into hiding. And sure enough in a while comes the big man Tressady, a-stealing furtive-fashion, and falls to hunting both in the open grave and round about but, finding nothing, steals him off again. Scarce was he out of eye-shot, Martin, than cometh the little dark fellow Ben, who likewise fell to stealthy search, grubbing here and there on hands and knees yet with none better fortune than his comrade. But of a sudden he gives a spring and, stooping, stands erect with Bartlemy's dagger in his hand. Now scarce had he found it than comes Tressady creeping from where he had lain watching.

"'Ha, Ben!' says he jovially. 'How then, lad, how then? Hast found what we sought? Here's luck, Ben, here's luck! Aye, by cock, 'tis your fortune to find it, and your fortune's my fortune, eh, Ben — us being comrades, Ben?'

"'Aye,' says Ben, turning the dagger this way and that.

"'Ha' ye come on the chart, Ben; ha' ye found the luck in 't, Ben?'

"'Stay, Roger, I've but just picked it up! —'

"'And was coming to your comrade with it, eh, Ben — share and share — eh, Benno — Bennie?'

"'Aye,' says Ben, staring down at the thing, 'but 'twas me as found it, Roger!'

"'And what then, lad, what then?'

"'Why, then, Roger, since I found it, 'tis mine,' says he, gripping the dagger in quivering fist and glancing up sideways.

"'Hilt and blade, Ben!'

"'And the chart, Roger!'

"'Aye, and the chart, Ben!' says Tressady, coming a pace nearer, and I saw his hook glitter.

"'And the treasure, Roger?' says Ben, making little passes in the air to see the blue gleam of the steel.

"'All yours, Ben, all yours, and what's yours is mine, according to oath, Ben, to oath! But come, Ben, you hold the secret o' the treasure in your fist — the silver goddess. Come, the chart, lad, out wi' the chart, and Bartlemy's jewels are ours — pearls, Ben — diamonds, rubies — aha, come, find the chart — let your comrade aid ye, lad —'

"'Stand back!' says Ben and whips a pistol from his belt. 'Look 'ee, Roger,' says he, 'I found the dagger without ye, and I'll find the chart — stand back!'

"'Why, here's ill manners to a comrade, Ben, ill manners, sink me — but as ye will. Only out wi' the chart, and let's go seek the treasure, Ben.'

"'D' ye know the secret o' this thing, Roger?'

"'Not I, Ben!'

"'Why, then must I break it asunder. Hand me yon piece o' rock,' says Ben, pointing to a heavy stone that chanced to be near.

"'Stay, Ben lad, 't were pity to crush the silver woman, but if you will, you will, Ben — take a hold!' So saying, Tressady picked up the stone, but, as his comrade reached to take it, let it fall, whereon Ben stooped for it, and in that moment Tressady was on him. And then — ha, Martin, I heard the man Ben scream and as he writhed, saw Tressady's hook at work . . . the man screamed but once . . . and then, wiping the hook on his dead comrade's coat, he took up the dagger and began to unscrew the head. But now, Martin, methought 't was time for me to act, if I meant to save my life, for I had nought but Nick Frant's knife, while within Tressady's reach lay the dead man's pistols and divers musquetoons and fusees on the beach behind him, which put me to no small panic lest he shoot me ere I could come at him with my knife. Thus, as I lay watching, I took counsel with myself how I might lure him away from these firearms wherewith he might hunt me down and destroy me at his ease; and

the end of it was I started up all at once and, leaning down towards him, shook the parchment in his face. 'Ha, Tressady!' says I. 'Is this the thing you've murdered your comrades for?' Now at this Tressady sprang back, to stare from me to the thing in my hand, Martin, and then — ha, then with a wild-beast roar he sprang straight at me with his hook — even as I had judged he would. As for me, I turned and ran, making for a rocky ledge I knew, with Tressady panting behind me, his hook ringing on the rocks as he scrambled in pursuit. So at last we reached the place I sought — a shelf of rock, the cliff on one side, Martin, and on the other a void with the sea thundering far below — a narrow ledge where his great bulk hampered him and his strength availed little. And there we fought, his dagger and hook against my dead comrade's knife, and thus as he sprang I, falling on my knee, smote up beneath raised arm, heard him roar and saw him go whirling over and down and splash into the sea — "

"And had the dagger with him, Adam!" said I in eager question.

"Aye, Martin, which was the end of an ill rogue and an evil thing — "

"The end," said I, "the end, Adam? Why, then — what o' this?"

So saying, I whipped the strange dagger from my wallet and held it towards him, balanced upon my palm. Now beholding this, Penfeather's eyes opened suddenly wide, then narrowed to slits as, viewing this deadly thing, he drew back and back and so sat huddled in his chair utterly still, only I heard his breath hiss softly 'twixt clenched teeth.

"Martin," said he in the same hushed voice, "when a man's dead he's dead, and the dead can never come back, can they, shipmate?"

But now, as we sat thus, eyeing the evil thing on the table betwixt us, my answer died on my lips, for there came a sharp, quick rapping of fingers on the lattice.

CHAPTER XI

Telleth of a Fight in the Dark

Penfeather was at the casement, had whipped open the lattice and, pinning the intruder by the throat, thrust a pistol into his face all in a moment; and then I recognized Godby the peddler.

"Let be, Adam!" I cried, springing forward. "Let be, here's a friend!" Saying nothing, Penfeather thrust away the weapon and, gripping the little man in both hands, with prodigious strength jerked him bodily in through the window; which done, he clapped to the lattice and, drawing the curtain, stood fronting Godby grim-lipped.

"And now what?" he said softly.

"Lord!" gasped Godby. "Lord love me, but here's a welcome to a pal; here's the second pistol I've had under my nose this night — throttle me in a hayband else!"

"What d' ye seek?"

"My pal Martin, 'cording to his word."

"D' ye know this fellow, Martin?"

"Aye!" I nodded and told briefly how and where we had met.

"God-be-here Jenkins am I, master," said Godby, "and well beknown to Joel Bym, as keepeth this house, strangle me else — ask Joel! And if you're Master Penfeather, I've first this here for ye and second, a warning." And speaking, Godby drew a letter from the breast of his leathern jerkin.

"A warning?" said Penfeather, glancing at the superscription. "Against whom?"

"A black dog as goes erect on two legs and calls himself Gregory Bragg."

"You mean Lady Brandon's under-bailiff?"

"I do so. Well, he be no friend o' yourn, and what's more, he's hand and fist wi' others as be no friends o' yourn either, cutthroat sailormen and black rogues every one."

"How d'ye know 'em for sailormen?"

"By their speech, master — I was a mariner once — and moreover by a ranting, hell-fire chorus."

"Ha!" said Penfeather, shooting a glance at me. "A chorus, was it?"

"Aye, master, concerning murder and what not."

"And the words running like this:

> "Two on a knife did part wi' life
> And three a bullet took O
> But three times three died plaguily
> A-wriggling on a hook O! —

Was that the way of it?"

"Smother me if it were n't!" quoth Godby, staring.

"Sit down, Godby, and tell me how you chanced on this," and Adam seated himself at the table.

"Well, master, I happened to lie snug hid 'neath a heap o' straw — and for why, says you? Says I to you, by reason o' two lousy catchpolls as won't let poor Godby be. Now this straw chanced to be in my Lady Brandon's stables — and why there, says you? Says I to you, because these lousy catchpolls, being set on poor Godby by this black dog Gregory and him my lady's man, my lady's stables is the last place catchpolls would come a-seeking Godby. Well now, as I lie there, I fall asleep. Now I 'm a light sleeper, and presently I 'm roused by the sound o' your name, master."

"Mine?" said Penfeather softly.

"Aye. 'Here 's a black passage to Captain Penfeather — curse him!' says a voice. 'Aye,' says another, 'by knife or bullet or —' and here he falls to singing of a

knife and a bullet and a hook. 'Avast!' says a third voice. 'Belay that, Abny, you'll be having all the lubbers about the place aboard of us!' 'Why,' says the man Abny, 'since you're in wi' us, well and good, but don't forget we was hard in his wake, aye, and ready to lay him aboard long before you hove in sight and damn all, says I.' 'Some day, Abny, some day,' says the other, 'I shall cut out that tongue o' yourn and watch ye eat it, lad, eat it — hist, here cometh Gregory at last — easy all.' Now the moon was very bright, master, and looking out o' my hay pile as the door opened I spied this rogue Gregory —"

"Did ye see aught o' the others?" questioned Adam eagerly.

"No, master, not plain, for they kept to the dark, but I could see they was four, and one a very big man. 'Ha' ye got it, friend, ha' ye got it?' says the big rogue. 'No, plague on't!' says Gregory. 'Look how I will, I can find nought.' 'Here's luck!' says the big fellow. 'Bad luck, as I'm a soul. Where's he lie?' 'Can't say,' says Gregory. 'His messages go to the Conisby Arms, but he aren't there, I know.' 'The *Faithfull Friend*, was it,' says the big fellow, 'a-lying off Deptford Creek?' 'Aye, the *Faithfull Friend*,' says Gregory and then chancing to look outside, claps finger to lip and comes creeping into the shadow. 'Lie low!' says he in a whisper — 'here's my lady —' And then, master, close outside comes my lady's voice calling 'Gregory! Gregory!' 'Answer, fool!' whispers the big man. 'Quick, or she'll be athwart our cable!' 'Here, my lady!' says Gregory and steps out o' the stable as she's about to step in. 'Gregory,' says she in hesitating fashion, 'have ye seen a stranger hereabouts to-night?' 'Not a soul, my lady!' says Gregory. 'A tall, wild man,' says she, 'very ragged and with yellow hair?' 'No, my lady,' says Gregory. Here she gives a sigh. 'Why, then,' says she, 'bear you this letter to Master Penfeather — at once.' 'To the Conisby Arms, my lady?' says Gregory. 'No,' says she, 'to the Peck o' Malt by Bedgebury Cross. And Gregory, should you

see aught of the poor man that suffered lately in the pillory, say I would speak with him. And now saddle and begone with my letter.' 'To Bedgebury,' says Gregory, 'the Peck o' Malt to-night, my lady?' 'This moment!' says she, mighty sharp. 'And, Gregory, I hear tales of your hard dealing with some of the tenantry; let me hear no more, or you quit my service!' And away she goes, leaving Gregory staring after her, letter in hand. ''T was she!' says the big man in a whisper. 'I'd know her voice anywhere — aye, 't was she whipped it from my girdle — my luck, shipmates, our luck — but we'll find it if we have to pull the cursed house down brick and brick.'"

"Godby," said Adam suddenly, leaning forward, "did ye get no glimpse o' this man's face?"

"Nary a one, master, and for why? The place was dark and he wore a great flapped hat."

"Why then," said Adam, pinching his chin, "did ye chance to see his hands?"

"No whit, master, and for why — he wore a loose cloak about him."

"And what more did ye hear?"

"No more, master, and for why? Because, as luck would have it, a straw tickled my nose, and I sneezed loud as a demiculverin, and there's poor Godby up and running for his life and these murderous rogues after poor Godby. Howbeit they durst not shoot lest they should alarm the house, and I'm very light on my feet, and being small and used to dodging catchpolls and the like vermin, I got safe away. Having done which and bethinking me of my pal Martin, I made for the Peck o' Malt. Now as luck would have it Gregory overtakes me (as I had purposed he should, I being minded to get even wi' him for good and all); down he gets from the saddle and has me by the collar and claps a great snaphance under my nose. 'So it was you, ye rogue, was it?' says he. 'That same,' says I, 'but who's that peeping over the hedge there?' The fool turns to see, I twist the pistol out of his grip and have him very neatly trussed and gagged with his belt and my

girdle, and so, heaving him i' the ditch, into saddle and here I am."

"Godby," said Penfeather, viewing him keen-eyed, "I need men — will ye sail with us for the Main?"

"Does Martin sail?"

"He does! Will ye along?"

"Heartily, Captain, heartily!"

"Are ye armed, Godby?"

"I've Gregory's dag here," said Godby, pulling out a long-barrelled pistol.

"Joel shall find ye another to go with it. And ye know the sea?"

"Aye, Captain, I sailed with Captain Myddleton as gunner and will lay you a gun with any man, from a murdering-piece or minion to a great culverin."

"Good!" said Penfeather and summoned Joel Bym, who, beholding the peddler, stared, bellowed jovial greeting and, at a nod from Penfeather, departed with him, arm in arm.

"Well, Martin," said Adam, when the door had closed, "and what d' ye make o' this tale of sailormen?"

"That they're the same rogues I fell out with."

"Beyond doubt, Martin. And what more?"

"That like enough they're on their road hither."

"Beyond any peradventure, shipmate."

"Well?"

"Well, let 'em come, Martin, let 'em come. There's somewhat here I don't understand, and I mislike mystery. So let them come, here in this little room, in light or dark, I ask no better."

"And you such a timid man, Adam!"

"True, Martin, but there's occasions when a worm turneth." Here he took up the letter Godby had brought and breaking the seal, read it through once, with a glimmer of his grim smile, read it again and frowned and, frowning, glanced across at me.

"Here's matter concerning you, Martin, hark'ee!" And he read this:

To Master Adam Penfeather:

Should you chance upon the poore man that suffered lately in the pillory (by no order or will of mine) you will I charge you do all you may to succour him in any manner soever: This letter I do write in much haste to instruct you that I purpose to sail in the *Faithfull Friend* along with you and my good cuzen Sir Rupert in this quest for my father. Moreover, I will you should sail as speedily soon as may be.

As regardeth the poore young man afore mentioned, if he be quite destitute as I do think him and will take no money as I do judge most like, then Master Adam you shall offer to him such employ in my ship the *Faithfull Friend* as he will accept.

And this is my wish and command

Joan Brandon.

He is great and tall and fierce with yellow hair and cruell mouth, yet seemeth more cruell than he trulie is.

"So there are you to a hair, Martin, and here's our enterprise brought to nought if she sail on this venture!"

"Why, then, she mustn't sail!"

"'T is her ship, Martin, and she's a Brandon!"

"Then sail without her."

"And be taken before we're clear o' the Downs and strung up at Execution Dock for piracy."

"Why, then, if she goeth aboard I don't!"

"And wherefore not, Martin?"

"I'll take no service with a Brandon!"

"Aye, verily, there's your pride, Martin, which is cumbersome cargo."

"Call it what ye will, I'll not sail."

"And your oath, comrade? Sail along o' me you must and shall! But having respect for your high-stomached pride you shall stow away in some hole or corner, and she never know you're aboard."

Hereupon I scowled, but perceiving him so serene, albeit a little grim, I said no more, and he fell to pacing slowly back and forth, head bowed and hands locked behind him.

"I need you, Martin," said he at last, "aye, I need you even more than I thought, the one man I may trust to in a pinch. For, Martin, here's that I don't understand."

So saying, he halted by the table and presently taking up the dagger (and with a strange reluctance) fell to twisting it this way and that; finally he gave a sudden twist, and the smiling head of the silver woman, coming away, shewed a hollow cavity running the length of the haft, roomy and cunningly contrived. Slowly he fitted the head into place again and, laying the weapon down, shook his head.

"Here's Bartlemy's dagger, true enough, Martin," said he, touching its keen point. "Here's what found Bartlemy's black heart — aye, and many another! Here's what went hurtling over the cliff in Tressady's fist — and yet here it lies — which is great matter for wonder, Martin. And, since 't is here — why, then — where is the vile rogue Tressady? Which is matter for painful speculation, Martin — where?"

"Snoring, likely enough!" answered I. "Not so far hence, or tramping hither."

"If so, Martin, then Death cannot touch him, the which is out of all reason!"

"'T is more like the fall did not kill him, Adam."

"Had you but seen the place, shipmate! But if water won't drown him and steel won't harm him — "

"Like you, he wears a chain shirt, Adam; that I do know. Moreover, the devil cherisheth his own, I've heard."

"Why, here's reason, Martin, plain reason, I grant, and yet — but 't is late and you 'll be for sleep, and there's reason in that too. Come, I 'll shew your bed — "

"Spare yourself — I want no bed," said I bitterly. "'T were a luxury wasted on the likes o' me. My couch shall be the corner yonder."

"Ah, prideful youth! 'T is sweet to be young, Martin!" said Penfeather with his sudden, whimsical half-

smile and clapping his hand on my shoulder. "Sleep where ye will, that corner is as good as another. See, there stands my tuck, a Spanish blade of notable good temper; it hath been a true friend to me many a time ere now and should be a trusty bedfellow. As for me, I'm for a feather bed. And, Martin," adds he, pausing to pinch his chin and view me sideways, "if aught should chance to me — at any time — the chart and treasure will be yours. So good night, comrade, and sleep sound, for 't is like we shall wake betimes."

Saying which he turned, slow and thoughtful, and went out, closing the door softly behind him. As for me, being very drowsy, I wrapped myself in my weatherworn cloak, blew out the candles and, lying down in the corner, was presently fast asleep.

Now as I slept I dreamed that Penfeather's long rapier, standing in the dark corner close by, was stealthily endeavouring to free itself from its leathern scabbard with intent to skewer me to the floor as I lay; and, striving thus to draw itself, made soft, strange noises and rustlings, insomuch that I presently woke and, staring motionless into the darkness above, knew that these sounds were real. Somewhere close by was a whisper of sound that came and went, a soft-drawn, furtive breath, a scraping of fingers on the panelling above me in the darkness; and in that moment also I became aware that the lattice yawned wide upon a square of glimmering blackness. Suddenly a sly-creeping foot touched me unseen and then even as the owner of this foot tripped over me came the roaring flash of a pistol hard by, followed immediately by another and, as I lay deafened and half dazed, the floor quivered to the soft, vicious thud of leaping, swift-trampling feet, and on the air was a confused scuffling, mingled with an awful, beast-like, worrying sound. And now (though I was broad awake, and tingling for action) I constrained myself to lie still, nothing stirring, for here (as I judged) was desperate knife-play; indeed more than once I heard the faint clink of steel. And now rose

shouts and cries and a tramp of feet on the stair without. Some one reeled staggering across the room, came a scrabbling at the open casement and, as I leapt up, the door burst open and Joel Bym appeared, flourishing a naked hanger and with Godby behind bearing a lanthorn whose flickering light showed Adam, knife in hand, where he leaned panting against the wall, a smear of blood across his pallid face and with shirt and doublet torn in horrid fashion.

"The window!" he gasped. "Shutters! 'Ware bullets!" I sprang forward, but Joel was before me and, crouching beneath the open lattice, swung the heavy shutters into position, but even as he did so, a bullet crashed through the stout oak.

"Doors all fast, Joel?"

"Aye, Cap'n! But who 's here — is 't the preventive? And me wi' the cellars choke-full. My cock! Is 't the customs, Cap'n?"

"Worse, Joel!" said Penfeather, wiping sweat from him.

"Art hurt, Adam?" I questioned, eyeing his wild figure; and now I saw that the thin, steel chain was gone from his sinewy throat.

"No, shipmate. But the dagger, look ye — 't is clean disappeared, Martin."

"And good riddance," quoth I. "But Adam — what o' your chart — gone along o' the dagger, has it?"

"Tush, man!" said he, sheathing his knife. "'T is snug in that wallet o' yours."

"My wallet!" I cried, clapping hand on it where it hung at my girdle.

"Aye, shipmate. I slipped it there as I bid ye good night! But Martin — oh, Martin, the dead is alive again — see how I 'm all gashed with his hook."

"Hook?" quoth Joel, shooting great, hairy head forward. "Did ye — say a — hook, Cap'n?"

"Aye, Joel — Tressady 's alive again."

"God love us!" gasped the giant and sank into a chair.

CHAPTER XII

We Set Out for Deptford Pool

Penfeather drew clenched hand across his brow and, coming to the table, reached the half-emptied flagon and drank what remained of the wine thirstily, while Bym, his great body huddled in the chair, stared at the bullet hole in the shutter with starting eyes. As to me, I picked up Penfeather's fallen pistols and laid them on the table, where Godby had set the lanthorn.

"Tressady!" Bym said at last in a hoarse whisper, "Tressady! Oh, Cap'n, be ye sarten sure?"

"Sure!" said Penfeather, in the same hushed manner and reaching powder and bullets from a cupboard he began methodically to reload his pistols. "He 'll be outside now where the shadows be thickest, waiting me with Abnegation and Sol and Rory and God knoweth how many more."

"Then he aren't dead, Cap'n?" Penfeather's black brows flickered and his keen eyes glanced from his rent doublet round about the room.

"Howbeit — he was here, Joel!" said he.

"Why, then, Cap'n, the dying woman's curse holds, and he can't die?" and Bym clawed at his great beard.

"He was here, Joel, in this room," said Penfeather, busy with powderhorn, "man to man, knife to knife — and I missed him. Since midnight I 've waited wi' pistols cocked and never closed eye — and yet here was he or ever I was aware; for, as I sat there i' the dark by the window above the porch, which is therefore easiest to come at, I spied Mings and him staring up at the lattice of this chamber. So here crept I and, opening door, saw him

move against the open lattice yonder — a shot no man could miss."

"Aye, Cap'n — aye?"

"And I — missed him, Joel — with both weapons and I within three yards of him; aye, I missed him with both pistols."

"Which is small wonder," said I, "for as you fired he tripped over me, Adam —"

"And why should he trip just then — at the one and only moment, Martin? Chance, says you? Why, when he came leaping on me in the black dark, should his hook meet and turn my knife from his throat? Chance again, says you? Why, when he flung me off and made for the window — why must I catch my foot 'gainst that staff o' yours and bring up against the wall with all the strength and breath knocked out o' me and no chance for one thrust as he clambered through the lattice? By the Lord, Martin, here 's more than chance, says I."

"Aye, by cock!" muttered Joel, shaking his head, "'t is 'witched he be! You 'll mind what I told ye, Cap'n — the poor lady as died raving mad aboard the *Delight* — how she died cursing him wi' life. And him standing by a-polishing o' that hook o' his — ah, Cap'n, I 'll never forget the work o' that same hook . . . many 's the time . . . Bartlemy's prisoners . . . men and women . . . aboard that cursed *Ladies' Delight!* By cock, I dream on 't sometimes and wake all of a sweat —"

"Here 's no time for dreams!" said Penfeather, ramming home the charge of his second pistol. "Is the passage clear?"

"Save for the matter of a few kegs, Cap'n, but 't will serve —"

"We start in half an hour, Joel."

"The three o' you, Cap'n?"

"Aye, we must be aboard as soon as maybe now."

"Captain," said Godby, "speaking as a master gunner, a mariner and a peddler, I 'm bold to say as there 's nought like bite and sup to hasten a man for a journey

or aught beside — flog me else! And there's nought more heartening than ham or neat's tongue, or brisket o' beef, the which I chanced to spy i' the kitchen — "

"Why, then, master gunner," said Penfeather, "go you and engage those same in close action, and I'll join ye as soon as I've shifted these rags o' mine."

"Adam," said I, unstrapping my wallet as Bym and Godby descended the stair, "if we are to have our throats cut to-night, 'twere as well I handed back your chart first;" and I laid it on the table.

"Why, 't is as safe with you, comrade — but as you will!" and he slipped the chain about his neck. "As for any throat-slitting, Martin, you'll find that with danger my inborn caution groweth to timidity — "

"Ha, yes!" I nodded. "Such timidity as walks under the very noses of desperate, well-armed rogues of a moonlight night."

"Why, the moon is down — or nearly so, Martin. And then, besides, this trim little inn hath divers exits discreetly nonapparent. 'T was a monastery once, I've heard."

"And now a smuggling ken it seems, Adam."

"Even so, comrade, and no place better suited! And there's the Bo's'n hailing!" said he, as a hoarse roar of "Supper O!" reached us. "Go down, Martin; I stay but to make things shipshape!" and he nodded toward the books and papers that littered the table. Upon the stairs I met Godby who brought me to a kitchen, very spacious and lofty, paved with great flagstones and with groined arches supporting the roof, and what with this and the wide fireplace flanked with fluted columns and enriched by carvings, I did not doubt but that here had once stood a noble abbey or the like.

"Pal," said Godby, as I stared about me, "you'd never guess as there be nigh three hundred kegs stowed hereabouts, besides bales and the like, choke me else! Ha, many's the good cargo I've helped Jo and the lads to run — eh, Joel?"

"So you 're a smuggler, Godby."

"Cock," said Bym reproachfully, and setting a goodly cheese on the table with a bang, "say free-trader, cock — t' other 'un 's a cackling word, and I don't like cackle — "

"Aye," nodded Godby, "that 's the word, 'free-trader,' Mart'n; so I am and what then? 'T was summat o' the sort as got me suspicioned by Gregory and his catchpolls, rot 'm." But here Adam entered, very soberly dressed in sad-coloured clothes, and we sat down to sup forthwith.

"Do we sail soon, Captain?" questioned Godby in a while.

"I hope to be clear o' the Downs a few days hence," said Adam.

"And you so short-handed, Cap'n," quoth Bym.

"Sir Rupert hath 'listed thirty new men, I hear, and rogues every one, I 'll be sworn."

"Sir Rupert — ?" said I.

"My lady's cousin, Martin, and captain of the expedition."

"Is he a sailor, Adam?"

"No, Martin; like most o' your fine gentlemen-adventurers, he knows no more of navigation than this cheese, which is just as well, Martin, aye, mighty well!"

"How so?"

"Who shall say, Martin, who shall say?" And here he took a long draught of ale. In a while, our meal being ended, Penfeather rose.

"As to arms, Martin, ha' ye aught beside your knife?"

"My staff and this pistol," answered I, taking out the silver-mounted weapon my Lady Brandon had thrust upon me.

"Is 't loaded, Martin?" I examined charge and priming and nodded. "Good!" said Adam. "Here 's five shot betwixt us; that should suffice. Up wi' the trap, Jo, and we 'll out." Hereupon Bym lighted his lanthorn and, putting aside the great settle by the hearth, stooped and raised one of the flagstones, discovering a flight of

worn, stone steps, down which we followed him and so into a great cellar or vaulted crypt where stood row upon row of barrels and casks, piled very orderly to the stone roof. Along the narrow way between strode Bym and, halting suddenly, stooped and lifted another flagstone with more steps below, down which we followed him into a passageway fairly paved whence divers other passages opened right and left. And when we had gone some distance, Adam halted.

"Best bring the light no further, Jo. And hark 'ee, Joel, as to this black rogue — this — y' know who I mean, Jo?"

"Aye — him, Cap'n!"

"That same, Jo. Well, keep an eye lifting, and if you find out aught worth the telling, let one o' your lads ride post to Deptford, Jo."

"Aye, Cap'n. Aboard ship?"

"Aboard ship."

"Cap'n," quoth he, grasping Adam's hand, "I 'm man o' few words, an' thanks t' you I 'm snug enough here wi' my wife and darter as is away till this cargo 's run, but say the word, and I 'll sail along o' you, come battle, murder or shipwreck — "

"Or a hook, Joel?" asked Penfeather softly, whereat Joel clawed at his beard and blinked into the lanthorn; finally he gave a great tug to his beard and nodded.

"Aye, Cap'n," said he, "for you — even that, by cock!"

"Good lad," said Penfeather, clapping him on brawny shoulder. "Bide where you are, Jo, and Fortune with you and yours. This way, Martin."

So having taken our leave of Bym, Godby and I followed Adam along the passage, guided by the Bo's'n's lanthorn until, turning a sudden, sharp corner, we plunged into pitchy gloom, wherein I groped my way until Penfeather's voice stayed me.

"Easy all!" said he softly. "Have your pistols ready and heed how you come." Creeping cautiously I found

myself amid leaves that yielded before me and, stepping through this natural screen, I stumbled into a bush and presently found myself standing in a small copse dim-lighted by a waning moon; and never a sound to be heard save the soft whisper of leaves about us and the faint, far cry of some night bird.

"Ha!" said Adam at last, gazing away to the sinking moon. "So our journey begins, and from the look o' things, Martin, from the look o' things, here's going to be need of all your resolution and all my caution ere we can see the end. Come!"

CHAPTER XIII

How I Came Aboard the *Faithfull Friend*

We followed a roundabout course, now across broad meadows, now treading green cart tracks, now climbing some grassy upland, anon plunging into the shadow of lonely wood or coppice until the moon was down, until was a glimmer of dawn with low-lying mists brimming every grassy hollow and creeping phantom-like in leafy boskages; until in the east was a glory, warming the grey mist to pink and amber and gold, and the sun, uprising, darted his level beams athwart our way and it was day.

And now from coppice and hedgerow, near and far, was stir and flutter, a whistling and a piping that rose ever louder and swelled to a thrilling ecstasy of gladness.

"Hark to 'em. Oh, pal, hark to 'em!" quoth Godby, lifting head to watch a lark that soared aloft. "Here 's music, Mart'n, here 's cure for the megrims, hope for the downcast and promise o' joys to come. Oh, hark to 'em!"

All the day Penfeather led us on by lonely ways, never seeming to weary and never at a loss, silent for the most part as one in profound thought, and I speaking little as is my wont, but Godby talked and sang and laughed for the three of us.

It was as we sat outside a little alehouse snugged 'mid trees, eating of bread and cheese, that Penfeather turned suddenly and gripped my arm.

"Martin," said he, "'t will be plaguy business carrying women aboard ship — along o' these lambs o' mine — there 's scarce a rogue but cheats the gallows with his every breath!"

"Why, then, tell her so, Adam, plain and to the point."

"'T would be vain breath, Martin, I know her too well — and she is a Brandon!"

"A curse on the name!" said I, whereupon Godby choked into his ale, stared in surprise and would fain have questioned me, but, meeting my eye, spake no word.

"D' ye know aught of navigation, Martin?" asked Adam suddenly.

"No whit, Adam, but I 'll handle a boat with any man."

"Ha!" said he, and sat there pinching his chin until, our hunger being appeased and the ale all drank, we fared on again. So we tramped it and though our road was long, I will here make short work of it and say that at last we came, very hot and dusty, into the village of Lewisham where we would fain have baited awhile at the "Lion and Lamb", a fair inn; but this Adam would by no means permit, so, leaving the village, we presently turned aside from the main road into a lane very pleasantly shaded by tall trees and bloomy hedgerows, the which (as I do think) is called Mill Lane. In a while we reached a narrow track down which Adam turned, and now as we went I was aware of strange sounds, a confused hubbub growing ever louder until, deep amid the green, we espied a lonely tavern before which stood a short, stout man who alternately wrung his hands in lamentation, mopped at bloody pate and stamped and swore mighty vehement, in the midst of which, chancing to behold Penfeather, he uttered joyful shout and came running.

"Master Penfeather," cried he, "oh, Master Penfeather, here 's fine doings, love my eyes! Here 's your rogues a-fighting and a-murdering of each other, which is no great matter, but here 's them a-wrecking o' my house, which is great matter; here 's them has broke my head wi' one o' my own pottle-pots which is greater matter; here 's me dursen't set foot i' the place, and my wife and maids all of a swound — oh, Master Penfeather, here 's doings, love my limbs!"

"Ha!" said Penfeather. "Fighting, are they, Jerry?"

"Like devils, Captain, your rogues and the rogues as

my Lord Dering 'listed and brought here yesterday — oh, love my liver — look at yon!" As he spoke came a crash of splintered glass and a broken chair hurtled through the wide lattice.

"So!" said Adam, striding towards the inn, and I saw a pistol in his hand. Following hard on his heels I entered the inn with him and so to the scene of the riot.

A long, low room, full of swirling dust, and amid this choking cloud a huddle of men who fought and struggled fiercely, roaring blasphemy and curses. Two or three lay twisted among overturned chairs and tables; others had crawled into corners to look to their hurts, while to and fro the battle raged the fiercer. Leaning in the doorway, Penfeather surveyed the combatants with his quick keen glance, and then the hubbub was drowned by the roar of his long pistol; the thunderous report seemed to stun the combatants to silence, who, falling apart, turned one and all to glare at the intruder. And in this moment of comparative silence, while all men panted and stared, from Penfeather's grim lips there burst a string of blistering sea-oaths such as even I had scarce heard till now. For a long minute he reviled them, the smoke curling from his pistol, his black brows knit across glittering eyes, his thin nostrils a-quiver, the scar glowing on his pallid cheek, his face indeed so changed and evil that I scarce knew him.

". . . ye filthy scum, ye lousy sons o' dogs!" he ended. "Ha, will ye fight agin my orders, then — mutiny, is it?"

"And who a plague are you and be cursed to ye?" panted a great fellow, flourishing a broken chair leg threateningly and scowling in murderous fashion.

"He 'll tell ye, there behind ye, fool!" snarled Penfeather, pointing sinewy finger. The big man turned, Penfeather sprang with uplifted pistol and smote him, stunned and bleeding, to the floor, then bestriding the prostrate carcass, fronted the rest with head viciously outthrust.

"And who 's next — come!" said he softly, scowling from one to other of the shrinking company. "You

Amos Penarth, and you, Richard Farnaby, aye and half a dozen others o' ye; you 've sailed wi' me ere now and you know when I say a thing I mean it. And you 'd fight, would ye, my last words to you being, 'see to it there be no quarrelling or riot.'"

"Why, Cap'n," answered one, "'t is all along o' these new 'listed rogues —"

"Aye, master," said another, "and that 's gospel-true; theer aren't a right sailorman among 'em —"

"Then we 'll learn 'em to be!" replied Penfeather. "Stand forward — the new men — show a leg and bustle, ye dogs!" Scowling and muttering, some twelve unlovely fellows obeyed. "I' faith!" said Penfeather, looking them over, "here 's fine stuff for the gallows! And where 's the rest of 'em?"

"Gone aboard this morning along o' Toby Hudd, the bo's'n!"

"See here, my bright lads," quoth Penfeather, eyeing each scowling face in turn, "learn this: when you come aboard my ship and I say to one o' ye do this or do that, he does it, d' ye see or — up to the yardarm he swings by his thumbs or his neck, as occasion warrants — d' ye get me, my bully roarers?"

Not a man of them spake a word, but all stood shifting uneasily beneath Penfeather's quick, bright eye, shuffling their feet and casting furtive glances on their fellows.

"Now as to this lump o' roguery," and Penfeather spurned the still unconscious man with his foot, "have him into the yard and heave a bucket o' water over him. As to you, Farnaby, muster the hands, and stand by to go aboard in half an hour — every unhung rascal."

Without we came on the misfortunate landlord, still in the deeps of gloom, but upon Adam's assurance that all damages should be made good, he brought us up a pair of stairs to a fair chamber and there served us a most excellent meal.

Scarce had we risen from table than came the man Penarth a-knocking, cap in hand, to say the men stood

ready to go aboard. We found some score fellows drawn up before the inn, and a desperate lot of cutthroats they looked, what with their hurts and general hang-dog air, as they stood there in the light of a rising moon. Having looked them over each and every, Penfeather spat, and setting them in Godby's charge, ordered them to go on before.

"Well, Martin," said he, as we followed together, "and how think ye of my lambs?"

"Call them raging tigers, rather—"

"Nay, tigers be cleanly creatures, I 've heard."

"A God's name, Adam, why truck with such ill rogues? Sure there be many honest mariners to be had?"

"Why, as to that, Martin, good men be scarce and ever hard to come by; moreover these scum are a means to an end, d' ye see?"

"How so?"

"Just that, Martin," said he, glancing at me in his furtive manner, "a means to an end."

"What end?"

"Ah, who may tell, Martin?" he sighed, shaking his head. Now when I would have questioned him further he put me off thus with side answers, until we were come to the waterside, which is called Deptford Creek. Here, having seen the others safe embarked, we took boat also and were soon rowing between the huge bulks of ships where dim lights burned and whence came, ever and anon, the sound of voices, the rattle of a hawser, a snatch of song and the like, as we paddled betwixt the vast hulls. Presently we were beneath the towering stern of a great ship and, glancing up at this lofty structure, brave with carved work and gilding, I read the name,

THE FAITHFULL FRIEND.

At a word from Adam the oars were unshipped and we glided alongside her high-curving side where hung a ladder, up which I followed Adam forthwith. She was a great ship (as I say) of some two hundred tons at the

least, with high forecastle and lofty stern, though I saw little else, ere, at a sign from Adam, I followed him down the after-gangway where, taking a flickering lanthorn that hung from a deck beam, he led me 'twixt a clutter of stores not yet stowed, past the grim shapes of great ordnance, and so down and down to a noisome place beneath the orlop.

"'T is not oversweet, Martin," said he, "but then bilge water never is, you 'll mind. But you 'll grow used to it in time, shipmate, unless, instead o' swallowing this unholy reek, you 'll swallow your pride and list as master's mate —"

"I 've no knowledge of navigation."

"But I 've enough for the two of us, Martin; 't is a comrade at my back I need. What 's the word?"

"No!" replied I, mighty short.

"As you will, shipmate," he sighed, "as you will, pride and bilge water go well together!" Which said, he brought me to a dark unlovely hole abaft the mizzen. "'T is none too clean, Martin," said he, casting the light round the dingy place, "but that shall be remedied and Godby shall bring ye bedding and the like, so although 't is plaguy dark and wi' rats a-plenty still, despite the stench you 'll lie snug as your pride will permit of. As for me, shipmate, I shall scarce close an eye till we be clear o' the Downs, so 't is a care-full man I shall be this next two days, heigho! So good night, Martin; I 'll send Godby below with all you lack."

Saying which, Penfeather turned and, groping his way into the darkness, left me scowling at the flickering lanthorn.

And now within my gloomy hiding place, dim-lit by flickering lanthorn, I passed many weary hours, while all about me was a stir and bustle, a confused sound made up of many, as the never-ending tread of feet, the sound of hoarse voices now faint and far and anon clear and loud, the scrape of a fiddle, snatches of rough song, the ceaseless ring and tap of hammers, — a very babel that, telling

of life and action, made my gloomy prison the harder to endure. And here (mindful of what is to follow) I do think it well to describe in few words the place wherein I lay. It was indeed a very dog hole, just below the orlop, some ten feet square (or thereabouts) shut in 'twixt bulkheads, mighty solid and strong but with a crazy door so ill-hung as to leave a good three inches 'twixt it and the flooring. It had been a storeroom (as I guessed) and, judging by the reek that reached me above the stench of the bilge, had of late held rancid fat of some sort; just abaft the mizzen it lay and hard against the massy rudderpost, for I could hear the creak and groan of the pintles as the rudder swung to the tide. Against one bulkhead I had contrived a rough bunk with divers planks and barrels, the which with mattress and bedding was well enough.

Now opposite my berth, within easy reach of my hand, was a knot-hole the which, by some trick of the grain, had much the look of a great staring eye, insomuch that (having no better employ) I fell to improving on nature's handiwork with my knife, carving and trimming around it; and in betwixt my sleeping, my eating and drinking (for Adam and Godby kept me excellent well supplied) I would betake me to my carving and fashioning of this eye and with my initials below it, the which foolish business (fond and futile though it was) served in no small measure to abate my consuming impatience and the dreary tedium.

Howbeit on the third day, my situation becoming unbearable, I stumbled out from my dog hole and, groping my way past kegs and barrels firm wedged in place against the rolling of the vessel, I climbed the ladder to the orlop. Here I must needs pause, for, dim though it was, the light from the open scuttle nigh blinded me. In a while, my eyes growing strong, I got me to the main deck where again I must stay to shade my eyes by reason of the radiance that poured through an open gun port. Glancing around after some while, I saw no one and wondered, for here was the main gun deck. Ten great pieces a side

I counted, with ports for divers more; I was yet wondering at the emptiness about me when I heard sudden uproar from the deck above my head, — shouts, cries, a rush and patter of many feet and above all Penfeather's furious hail.

Wondering, I came to the open port and, leaning out, saw it was evening with a heavy mist creeping down upon the waters, and through the mist loomed a great, black ship drifting lubberly across our hawse. Louder and more furious grew the shouting above, answered by a hail aboard the great, black craft as, broadside on, she swung towards us.

And now, creeping in the mist, I beheld a small boat with a great, shapeless bundle in the stern sheets and rowed by a single waterman who swung easily to his oars, scanning now the *Faithfull Friend*, now the great black ship, like one who bided the inevitable crash. Sudden I heard the roar of one of Penfeather's ever-ready pistols, followed by his voice upraised in vicious sea-curses and, glancing up, saw the black ship right aboard of us and braced myself for the impact; came a shock, a quiver of creaking timbers and the groan of our straining hawsers as the black ship, falling off, drifted by in a roaring storm of oaths and blasphemy. Now when her battered stern gallery was nigh lost in the mist, bethinking me of the boat I had seen, I glanced about and beheld matter that set me wondering; for here was the fellow plying his oars with a will and so near that I might have tossed a biscuit aboard him; moreover the great misshapen bundle had lain in the stern sheets was there no longer, which set me mightily a-wondering. Long after man and boat were swallowed up in the fog I sat there lost in thought, insomuch that I started to feel a hearty clap on the shoulder and, turning, beheld Godby, a pair of great gold rings in his ears and very sailor-like in all things from sea boots to mariner's bonnet.

"Here's a ploy, Mart'n!" said he with a round oath. "Here's yon curst lubberly craft carried away our star-

board cat-head and six feet o' the harpings wi't, sink him! And us but waiting for my lady to come aboard to trip anchor and away. And now here's we shore-bound for another two days at the least, as I'm a gunner! And all on account of yon black dag, burn him! A plaguy fine craft as sails wi' no name on her anywheres, keelhaul me else! But Penfeather winged one o' the lubberly rogues, praise God, Mart'n! Which done and with due time to curse 'em, every mother's son of 'em, he turns to — him and the carpenter and his mates there and then to repair damages — ha, a man o' mark is Captain Adam, pal."

"Godby," asked I, "did ye chance to see aught of a boat carrying a great bundle in the stern sheets and rowed by a man in a red cap?"

"Nary a blink, Mart'n, — why?"

"I'm wondering what came of that same bundle — "

"Hove overboard, belike, pal — there's many a strange thing goes a-floating out to sea from hereabouts, Mart'n — drownd me!"

"Belike you're right!" said I.

"Mart'n, Sir Rupert's ashore to meet her ladyship, so you'm free to come 'bove deck, if so minded?"

"Nay, I'll bide where I am, Godby."

"Why, then come, Mart'n, clap your eye on my beauties; here's guns, Mart'n, six culverins, and t' other's sakers, and yonder astern's two basilisks as shall work ye death and destruction at two to three thousand paces. 'Bove deck amidships I've divers goodly pieces as minions, falcons and patereros with murderers mounted aft to sweep the waist. For her size she's well armed, is the *Faithfull Friend*, Mart'n!"

Thus Godby, as he led me from gun to gun, slapping hand on breech or trunnion, and as I hearkened, 't was hard to recognise the merry peddler in this short, square, grave-faced gunner who spake with mariner's tongue, hitched ever and anon at the broad belt of his galligaskins and rolled in his gait already.

"She's a fair ship!" said I, seating myself on one of the great guns mounted astern.

"She is so, Mart'n. There's no finer e'er sailed from Deptford Pool, which is saying much, split me if it is n't. Though, when all's said, Martin, I could wish for twenty more men to do justice to my noble guns, aye, thirty at the least."

"Are we so short?"

"We carry but ninety and two all told, pal, which considering my guns is pity — aye, vast pity, plague me else! 'T would leave me short-handed to serve my guns should they be necessary, which is fair and likely, Martin."

"And black rogues they are!" said I.

"Never clapped eyes on worse, pal, kick me endwise else! But Captain Adam's the man for such, and I mean to work 'em daily, each and every, at my guns as soon as we be well at sea. Ah, there soundeth Toby Hudd's pipe — all hands on deck — this should be her ladyship coming aboard. So here's me aloft and you alow, and good luck to both, pal." Saying which he nodded, gave a hitch to his wide galligaskins and rolled away.

Now coming to the gun port I have mentioned, I must needs pause there awhile to look out across the misty river, already darkening to evening; and thus presently beheld a boat, vague and blurred at first, but as it drew nearer, saw in the stern sheets four gallants who laughed and talked gaily enough, and the muffled forms of two women, and in one, from the bold, free carriage of her head, I recognised, despite hood and cloak, my Lady Joan Brandon. Nay, as the boat drew in, I heard the sweet, vital tones of her voice and with this in my ears, I caught up my lanthorn and so descended to the orlop. Now as I paused at the narrow scuttle that gave down to my noxious hiding place, I thought to hear a step somewhere in the gloom below.

"Ha, Godby!" cried I. "Are ye down there, man?" But getting no answer, I descended the ladder, bethinking

me of the rats (whereof I had no lack of company) and coming into my dog hole, closed the rickety door and having supped, cast myself down upon my bed and blew out the light, and despite the rustle and scutter away there in the dark beyond my crazy door I was very soon asleep.

And in my sleep what must I dream of but rats with eyes that glared in the dark, that crawled ever nearer, while one that crept upon my bosom grew and swelled into a great fellow with a steel hook in place of one hand, a face with flashing white teeth and glowing eyes that peered close ere eyes and teeth vanished, and I sunk down and down into a black emptiness of dreamless slumber.

CHAPTER XIV

Tells How We Were Dogged by the Black Ship

I awoke in panic and leaping up groped in the pitch dark until my eager fingers closed on the haft of the sheath knife under my pillow and with this naked in my hand I crouched, awaiting I knew not what; for all about me was direful sound, groans and cries with wailings long drawn out in shuddering complaint. Then, all at once, my panic was lost in sudden great content and, thrusting away the knife, I took flint and steel and therewith lighted my lanthorn; since now indeed I knew these dismal sounds were nought but the creak and groan of the stout ship, the voice of her travail as she rose to the seas. And as I hearkened, every individual timber seemed to find a voice, and what with this and the uneasy pitching and rolling of the ship I judged we were well under way and beyond the river mouth. This (bethinking me of the damage we had sustained from the great, black ship) set me to wondering, insomuch that I reached for my lanthorn, minded to steal on deck that I might know our whereabouts and if it were day or night, since here in the bowels of the ship it was always night. So (as I say) I reached for the lanthorn, then paused, as above all other sounds rose a cheery hail and under the door was the flicker of a light. Hereupon I opened the door (though with strangely awkward fingers) and thus espied Godby lurching towards me.

"What, Mart'n, pal," said he, sitting beside me on my berth and setting down the food and drink he had brought, "are ye waking at last?"

"Have I slept long, Godby?"

"You 've slept, Mart'n, a full thirty hours."

"Thirty hours, Godby?"

"Split me crosswise else, pal!"

"Mighty strange!" said I, reaching for the flask he had brought, for I felt my mouth bitterly parched and dry while, added to the consuming thirst, my head throbbed miserably.

"Well, here we be, pal, clear o' the river this twelve hours and more. And, Mart'n, this is a ship — aye, by hokey, a sailer! So true on a wind, so sweet to her helm, and Master Adam 's worthy of her, blister me else!"

"'T is strange I should sleep so long!" and I clasped my aching head.

"Why, you 'm wise to sleep all ye can, pal, seeing there be nought better to do here i' the dark," said he, setting out the viands before me. "What, no appetite, Mart'n?" I shook my head. "Lord love ye, 't is the dark and the curst reek o' this place, pal — come aloft, all 's bowmon; the fine folk hain't found their legs yet, nor like to while this wind holds, Mart'n — so come aloft wi' Godby."

Nothing loth, I rose and stumbled towards the ladder, marvelling to find my hands and feet so unwieldy as I climbed; the higher I went the more the rolling and pitching of the ship grew on me, so that when at last I dragged myself out on deck it was no wonder to find the weather very blusterous and with, ever and anon, clouds of white spray lashing aboard out of the hissing dark with much wind that piped shrill and high in cordage and rigging.

Being sheltered by the high bulwark hard beside the quarter-deck ladder, I leaned awhile to stare about me and drink in great draughts of sweet, clean air, so that in a little my head grew easier and the heaviness passed from me. Ever and anon the moon peeped through wrack of flying cloud, by whose pale beam I caught glimpses of bellying sails towering aloft with their indefinable mass of gear and rigging and the heel and lift of her looming forecastle as the stately vessel rose to the heaving seas or plunged in a white smother of foam.

"She rides well, Mart'n!" roared Godby in my ear. "Aha, here's duck of a ship, pal!"

"Where's Adam?" I questioned.

"To'gallant poop, Martin. Lord love ye, it's little sleep he's had since we hove anchor. Hark'ee, pal — he's got it into his head as we'm being dogged!"

"Dogged, man — by what?"

"By that same great, black ship as fouled us — he has so, pal — roast me else! But come your ways." So saying, Godby climbed to the quarter-deck and I after him, and mounting the poop ladder, presently came on Penfeather, peering hard over our lee.

"Ha, is it you, shipmate!" said he, drawing me out of the wind. "Look yonder; d'ye see aught of a rag o' sail, Martin?" Following his pointing finger, I stared away into the distance across a tumbling spume of waters vague in the half light. "D'ye glimpse aught, Martin?"

"Nothing, Adam!"

"Wait for the moon, shipmate — now, look yonder!" As the light grew, I swept the distant horizon with my eyes until, all at once against the night, I saw the sheen of distant canvas that gleamed and was gone again as a cloud veiled the moon. "You saw it, Martin?"

"Plainly!" answered I, whereupon he sprang away to the men at the helm; came the hoarse roar of speaking trumpet, and decks and waist below seemed alive with scurrying, dim figures; and now was a chorus of shouts and yo-ho-ing as the *Faithfull Friend*, obedient to his commands, swung off upon an altered course.

"Godby," said Adam, beckoning us where stood the compass or bittacle, "look'ee, as she bears now we should be nigh enough yon curst ship to learn more of her by peep o' dawn."

"Aye, Cap'n — and then?"

"Then you shall try what you can do wi' one o' those long guns o' yours."

"Lord love ye, Cap'n, that's the spirit!" cried Godby,

hitching joyously at his broad belt. "All I asks is a fair light and no favour!"

"And you have the middle watch, Godby man, so I'll get a wink o' sleep," said Adam, "but do you call me so soon as we raise her hull. As for you, Martin, you'll have slept your fill, I judge."

"And yet I'm plaguy drowsy still!"

"There's a spare berth in the coach, comrade, an you're so minded!"

"Nay, Adam, I'll watch a while with Godby."

"Good! You've keen eyes, Martin — use 'em!" said he, and goes down the ladder forthwith.

And now, pacing the lofty poop beside Godby, I was aware that the *Faithfull Friend* was dark fore and aft; not a light twinkled anywhere.

"How comes this, Godby?" asked I, pointing to the dim shapes of the great stern lanthorns above us.

"Cap'n's orders, Martin! We've been dark these two nights, and yet if yon craft is what we think, 'twould seem she follows us by smell, pal, smell. As how, say you? Says I, last night she was fair to be seen, having closed us during the day, so out go our lights and up goes our helm and we stand away from her. At dawn she was nowhere and yet — here she is again — if yon ship be the same."

"Which we shall learn in an hour or so, Godby."

"Aye, Mart'n, if she don't smell us a-coming and bear away from us. And yet she must be a clean, fast vessel, but we'll overhaul her going roomer or on a bowline."

"Roomer? Speak plain, Godby, I'm no mariner!"

"Time'll teach ye, pal! Look 'ee now, 'roomer' means 'large', and 'large' means 'free' and 'free' means wi' a quartering wind, and that means going away from the wind or the wind astarn of us; whiles 'on a bowline' means close-hauled agin the wind, d'ye see?"

"Godby, 'tis hard to believe you that same peddler I fell in with at the 'Hop-pole.'"

"Why, Mart'n, I'm a cove as adapts himself accord-

ing. Give me a pack and I'm all peddler and j'y in it; gi'e me a ship and I'm all mariner to handle her sweet and kind and lay ye a course wi' any — though guns is my meat, Mart'n. Fifteen year I followed the sea and a man is apt to learn a little in such time. So here stand I this day not only gunner but master's mate beside of as tight a ship, maugre the crew, as ever sailed — and all along o' that same chance meeting at the 'Hop-pole.'"

"And though a friend of Bym you knew little of Adam Penfeather?"

"Little enough, Mart'n; Joel be no talker — but it do seem Jo was one o' the Coast Brotherhood once when Cap'n Penfeather saved his life and that, years agone. So Joel comes home and sets up marriage, free trade and what not when one day lately Master Adam walks into the 'Peck o' Malt' and no whit changed for all the years save his white hair. And here comes rain, Mart'n —"

"And wind!" said I, as the stout ship reeled and plunged to the howling gust.

"No, Mart'n," roared Godby above the piping tumult, "not real wind, pal — a stiffish breeze — jolly capful."

Slowly the night wore away and therewith the buffeting wind gentled somewhat; gradually in the east was a pale glimmer that, growing, showed great, black masses of torn cloud scudding fast above our reeling mastheads and all about us a troubled sea. But as the light grew, look how I might, nowhere could I descry aught of any ship upon that vast horizon of foaming waters.

"Ha!" said Godby, venting huge sigh, "there's to be no play for my guns this day, Mart'n."

"Nay but," said I, mighty perplexed, "what's come of her? She could never have marked our change of course at the distance and 't was black dark beside, and we bore no lights."

"Mayhap she smelt us, pal, as I said afore. Howbeit, 't is beyond me, cram me wi' rope yarn else!"

Now, as he spoke, up came the sun, turning lowering

sky and tempestuous ocean to glory; every ragged cloud became as it were streaming banners enwrought of scarlet and gold, every foaming billow a rolling splendour rainbow-capped, insomuch that I stood awed by the very beauty of it all.

"I love the good, kind earth, Mart'n, wi' its green grass and flowers a-peep; 't is a fair resting-place for a man when all 's done and said, but yonder, pal — ah, there 's glory for ye! Many 's the time I 've watched it, dawn and sunset, and, minding all the goodly ships and the jolly lads as are a-sleeping down below, at such times, Mart'n, it do seem to me as if all the good and glory of 'em came aloft for eyes to see awhile; howbeit, 't is a noble winding sheet, pal, from everlasting to everlasting, amen! And by that same token the wind 's veering, which meaneth a fair-weather spell, and I must trim. Meantime do you rouse Master Adam." And here, setting hands to mouth, Godby roared high above the wind:

"Watch ho! Watch! Brace about — bowse away there!"

As I crossed the deck, up the poop ladder came Adam himself, his red seaman's bonnet tight-drawn about his ears and a perspective glass under his arm. "'T is as I thought, Martin," said he, pinching his chin and scowling away to leeward; "she changed course as we did."

"Nay, but, Adam, how should she know we changed and the night so black — "

"Very easily, shipmate, by means of a light — "

"We bore no lights, Adam."

"None the less, some one aboard this ship signalled yon black craft by means of a lanthorn; 't is beyond doubt!"

"And why should she follow us, think ye?"

"Why am I a marked man, shipmate; why have I been dogged hither and yon across seas? Come into the coach and I 'll tell ye a thing. Godby," coming where Godby stood beside the steersman, "lay her on her old course. 'T is Merrilees takes next watch, I think — tell him to warn me so soon as we raise her accursed topsails."

"What," said I, as we climbed from the lofty poop, "you think she will dog us still, then?"

"I know it, Martin!" said he gloomily and so brought me into a smallish cabin under the topgallant poop; here were bunks to larboard and starboard with a table midway furnished with calendars, charts, a cross-staff, an astrolabe, with globes and the like, while against the walls stood rows of calivers, musquetoons and fusees, set in racks very orderly. "Aye, shipmate," said he, noting my gaze, "every firelock aboard is either here or in the arm-chests i' the roundhouse below, and our powder is all stored well aft, by reason that I am a cautious man, d' ye see! Sit ye, Martin! Now as to this black ship — first of all she fouls us in the river, the which was no accident, Martin, though just what the motive was I 'm yet a-seeking. Second, as she drifted past us, whom should I see aboard her but Abnegation Mings and pulled trigger a moment too late but winged another o' the rogues. Third, when we 'd repaired our damage and got us clear of the river, what should we see but this same black ship hove short waiting us, for she presently stands after us. And so she 's dogged us ever since and so dog us she will to the world's end unless I can bring her to action."

"She 's a fighting ship by her looks and heavily armed!"

"So are we, Martin!"

"And our men, Adam?"

"Ah!" said he, pinching his chin, "there it is, Martin, there it is! Look 'ee, shipmate, in all this crew there are no more than twenty men I can count on; nay, less — ten only can I swear by. See now, here 's you and Merrilees and Godby, here 's Farnaby and Toby Hudd the bo's'n, Treliving the carpenter, and McLean his mate; here 's Robins and Perks and Taffery the armourer, — good mariners all. These I can trust, shipmate, but never another one!"

"And what of the captain, Sir Rupert Dering!"

"That, Martin!" replied Penfeather, snapping his

fingers. "A very gentleman-like fool, d' ye see, a bladder of air — like his three fellows."

"So we have four gentlemen aboard, Adam?"

"Aye — princocks all that do nothing but vie in court to her ladyship! Now look 'ee, Martin, what with one thing or another and this hell-fire ship on our heels in especial, there's stir and disaffection among the crew, a whispering o' corners that I don't like, and which is apt to spread unless looked to. Wherefore this morning I ordered a certain red-haired rascal fifty lashes athwart a gun. But the bo's'n had laid on but poor ten and the fellow roaring lustily when into the 'tween-decks cometh my lady in mighty taking and, seeing the rogue's back a little bloody, orders him freed and thereafter cossets him wi' dainties from her own table. Lord love ye! Which cometh o' women aboard ship!" And here Adam sighed mighty dismal.

"Why, then," said I, "here's work for me, belike."

"As how, Martin?"

"Nay, leave it to me; being little better than rogue myself I should know how to outmatch roguery!"

"Meaning you 'll spy on 'em, shipmate?"

"And lie and cozen and join fellowship with 'em if need be. Howbeit if there's aught afoot I'll bottom it, one rascally fashion or t' other."

"'T is desperate risk, Martin, and should they suspicion you — "

"Why, look, Adam, my life's none so sweet or precious that I'd cherish it in lavender. Beside, I've a feeling I may not die until — at least, not yet."

"Wait!" said he, as I rose. "Bide a while, Martin!" And, opening a locker beneath his bunk, he took thence a shirt of fine chainwork like that he himself wore. Shaking my head I would have put it by, but he caught my arm in his powerful grip and shook me insistent. "Take it, Martin," said he, "take it, man; 't is easy and pleasant as any glove yet mighty efficacious 'gainst point or edge, and you go where knives are sudden! Stay, then, take it

for my sake, shipmate, since trusty comrades be few and mighty hard come by." So in the end I did it on beneath my doublet and found it to irk me nothing. "And now, what?" he questioned, as I opened the door.

"Sleep," answered I, yawning.

"There 's a bunk yonder, Martin," said he, eyeing me 'twixt narrowed lids.

"Nay, I 'm for my dog hole, Adam."

"You seem to sleep much and mighty well, despite stench and rats, shipmate."

"I 'm grown used to 'em," I said, with another yawn, "and as to sleeping I do little else of late — 't is the dark, belike, or bad air, or lack of exercise."

Now as I rose to be gone, the deck seemed to heave oddly beneath my feet and the cabin to swing dizzily round, so that I must needs grip at the table to steady myself while Adam peered at me through a haze, as it were.

"What 's here, Martin, are ye sick?" he questioned.

"A vertigo!" I mumbled. "I 'll into the air!" In a little, the dizziness abating, I got me out on deck and found in the rushing wind mighty comfort and refreshment, while Adam steadied me with his arm. "Let be!" said I, shaking off his hold. "'T was nought — I 'll go sleep again." And waiting for no more I stumbled down the quarter ladder; but even as I went, the haze seemed to close about me thicker than ever and groping my way to the ship's side I sank across the bulwark and was miserably sick. This agony passing, I made my way below until I reached the orlop; but now, feeling my sickness upon me again, I crept away into a dark corner and cast me down there. And lying thus in my misery I little by little became aware of some one weeping hard by, a desolate sobbing very pitiful to hear. Insomuch that (maugre my weakness) I got up and going whence this sobbing proceeded, presently came on a small, huddled figure and, stooping, saw it was a little lad. At my step he started to his knees, elbow upraised as if expecting a blow.

"Why d'ye weep, boy?" I questioned. "What's your trouble?"

"Nowt!" replied he, cowering away; but taking him by his little, thin shoulders I lifted him into the dim light of a swinging lanthorn and looked into a small, pallid face, swollen and disfigured by cuts and bruises wrought by some brutal hand.

"Who did this?" I demanded.

"Nobody!" said he, gulping a sob.

"Who are you?"

"'Tween-decks boy."

"How old are you, child?"

At this he stared up at me out of his swollen eyes then, covering his face in ragged sleeve, broke into convulsive sobbing.

"What now?" asked I, drawing him beside me. "What now — ?"

"She used to call me 'child' — my mother — " and here his grief choked him. Now as I looked down upon this little, pitiful creature, I forgot my sickness in sudden, fierce anger.

"Boy," said I, "who 's been flogging you — speak!"

"Red Andy — " he gasped; "'e be always a-doin' of it, 'e be — wish I was dead like my mother — "

"Jim, ho, Jimmy," roared a voice from somewhere in the gloom forward. "Jim — plague seize ye, show a leg, will 'ee — " Here (and before I could stay him) the boy started up and pattered away, drying his tears as he ran. Now as I lay there I kicked off my shoes and hearkened expectant. Thus, all at once I heard a murmur rising to a wail that ended in a shrill scream and, getting to my feet, I crept stealthily forward. Past main and foremasts I crept, past dark storerooms and cubby-holes and so to a crack of light and, clapping my eye thereto, espied two fellows rolling dice and beyond them the boy, his hands lashed miserably to a staple in the bulkhead, his little body writhing under the cruel blows of a rope's-end wielded by a great, red-headed fellow.

Now in my many desperate affrays with my fellow-slaves (those two-legged beasts) I had learned it is the first blow that tells; wherefore, groping for the latch, I stealthily opened the door and or ever the red-headed fellow was aware, I was upon him from behind and, giving him no chance for defence, I smote him a buffet under the ear that tumbled him against the bulkhead, whence he sank to hands and knees. Then while, half-dazed, he strove to rise, I kicked him down again and, setting my foot upon his chest, caught up the rope's-end he had dropped and beat him therewith until he roared, until he groaned and lay writhing, face hid beneath his crossed arms. Then, whipping out my knife, I fronted his two mates, the one a doleful, bony man with a squint, the other a small, mean, black-eyed fellow in a striped shirt who, closing one bright eye, leered at me with the other. All at once he nodded and pointing from the knife in my fist to the fellow groaning beneath my foot, drew a long thumb across his own stringy throat and nodded again. Hereupon I stooped above my captive and set the flat of my blade to his forehead just below his thick, red hair.

"Look 'ee, dog!" I panted while he glared up at me beneath his bruised arms. "Set so much as a finger on yon pitiful brat again, and I'll cut a mark in your gallows face shall last your life out."

"His throat, cully — quick's the word!" breathed a voice in my ear. But now as I turned and the little, black-eyed fellow leapt nimbly back, was a creaking and groaning of the ladder that led to the main deck above, and down came a pair of prodigious stout legs, and after these a round body and last of all a great, flat face, small of mouth, small of nose and with a pair of little, quick eyes that winked and blinked betwixt hairless lids.

Having got him down the ladder (and with wondrous ease for one of his bulk) the fat fellow stood winking and blinking at me the while he patted one of his plump cheeks with plump finger.

"Love my limbs!" said he in soft, high-pitched voice.

"Perish and plague me, but who's the friend as be a rope's-ending o' ye, Andy lad — you as be cock o' the ship?" Here the fellow beneath my foot essayed to curse but groaned instead. "Bless my guts!" said the fat man, blinking harder than ever. "So bad as that, Andy lad? Wot then, hath this fine, upstanding cock o' cocks thrashed all the hell-fire spirit out o' ye, Andy lad? Love my innards — I thought no man aboard could do as much, Andy."

"He jumped me from behind!" said the fellow Andy 'twixt snarl and groan and writhing under my prisoning feet.

"And where," asked the fat man, smiling at me, "where might you ha' come from, my bird o' price? The bo's'n's mate, Samuel Spraggons is me, friend — Sam for short, called likewise Smiling Sam — come, come, never scowl on Sam — nobody never quarrels with the Smiler; I'm friends wi' every one, I am, friend."

"Why, then — loose the child!" said I.

"Child? Ha, is't this little rogueling ye mean, friend?" As he spoke (and smiling yet) he caught the boy's ear and wrung it 'twixt vicious thumb and finger, whereon I whirled the rope's-end, but he sprang out of reach with wondrous agility and stood patting plump cheek and smiling more kindly than ever the while I cut the cords that bound the boy's wrists, who, with an upflung, wondering look at me, sped away into the orlop and was gone.

"Now mark me, Spraggons," said I, "harm the child again — any of ye — and I'll beat your fat carcass to a jelly."

"No, no!" quoth he, "you can't quarrel wi' me; the Smiler don't never quarrel wi' none — you'd never strike Smiling Sam, friend!"

"Stand still and see!" said I. But hereupon he retreated to the ladder and I, feeling my sickness upon me again, contented me by throwing the rope's-end at the fellow and, stepping out backward, clapped to the door. So

with what speed I might I got me down into the hold and to my dog hole. And here I saw I had left my lanthorn burning and found in this light strange comfort. Now being mighty athirst I reached the demijohn from the corner and drank deep, but the good water tasted ill on my parched tongue; moreover the place seemed strangely close and airless and I in a great heat, wherefore I tore off my sleeved doublet and, kicking off my shoes, cast myself upon my miserable bed. But now, as I lay blinking at the lanthorn, I was seized of sudden, great dread, though of what I knew not; and ever as my drowsiness increased so grew my fear until (and all at once) I knew that the thing I dreaded was sleep and fain would I have started up, but, even then, sleep seized me, and strive how I would my eyes closed and I fell into deep and fear-haunted slumber.

CHAPTER XV

Telleth How An Eye Watched Me from the Dark

It is not my intention to chronicle all those minor happenings that befell us at this time lest my narrative prove overlong and therefore tedious to the reader. Suffice it then that the fair weather foretold by Godby had set in, and day by day we stood on with a favouring wind. Nevertheless, despite calm weather and propitious gale, the disaffection among the crew waxed apace by reason of the great black ship that dogged us, some holding her to be a bloody pirate and others a phantom ship foredooming us to destruction.

As to myself, never was poor wretch in more woeful plight for, 'prisoned in the stifling hold where no ray of kindly sun might ever penetrate and void of all human fellowship, I became a prey to wild, unholy fancies and a mind-sickness bred of my brooding humours; my evil thoughts seemed to take on stealthy shapes that haunted the fetid gloom about me, shapes of horror and murder conjured up of my own vengeful imaginations. An evil time indeed this, of long, uneasy sleepings, of hateful dreams and ill wakings, of sullen humours and a horror of all companionship insomuch that when came Godby or Adam to supply my daily wants, I would hide myself until they should be gone; thereafter, tossing feverishly upon my miserable bed, I would brood upon my wrongs, hugging to myself the thought of vengeance and joying in the knowledge that every hour brought me the nearer its fulfilment.

And now it was that I became possessed of an uneasy

feeling that I was not alone, that beyond my crazy door was a thing, soft-breathing, that lurked watchful-eyed in the gloom, hearkening for my smallest movement and following on soundless feet whithersoever I went. This unease so grew upon me that when not lost in fevered sleep I would lie, with breath in check, listening to such sounds as reached me above the never-ceasing groaning of the vessel's labour, until the squeak and scutter of some rat hard by or any unwonted rustling beyond the door would bring me to an elbow in sweating panic.

To combat the which sick fancies it became my custom to steal up from my fetid hiding place at dead of night and to prowl soft-footed about the ship where none stirred save myself and the drowsy watch above deck. None the less (and go where I would) it seemed I was haunted still, that behind me lurked a nameless dread, a silent, unseen presence. Night after night I roamed the ship thus, my fingers clenched on the knife in my girdle, my ears on the strain and eyes that sought vainly every dark corner or patch of shadow.

At last, on a night, as I crouched beside a gun on the 'tween-decks I espied of a sudden a shape, dim and impalpable-seeming in the gloom, that flitted silently past me and up the ladder to the deck above. Up started I, knife in hand, but in my haste I stumbled over some obstacle and fell; but up the ladder I sprang in pursuit, out into moonlight, and hastening forward came face to face with Adam.

"Ha — rogue!" I cried, and sprang at him with uplifted knife; but as I came he stepped aside (incredibly quick) and thrusting out a foot, tripped me sprawling.

"Easy, shipmate, easy!" said he, thrusting a pistol under my nose. "Lord love me, Martin, what would you now?"

"So you 'll follow me, will you!" I panted. "You 'll creep and crawl and spy on me, will you?"

"Neither one nor t' other, Martin —"

"'T was you climbed the gangway but now!"

"Not I, Martin, not I." And as I scowled up at him I knew he spoke truth and a new fear seized me.

"And you saw no one, Adam? Nothing — no shape that flitted up the ladder hitherwards and no sound to it?"

"Never a thing, Martin, save yourself."

"Why, then," said I, clasping my temples — "why, then — I 'm mad!"

"How so, comrade?"

"Because I 'm followed — I 'm watched — spied upon sleeping and waking!"

"Aye, but how d' ye know?" he questioned, stooping to peer at me.

"I feel it — I 've known it for days past, and to-night I saw it — I 'm haunted, I tell you —"

"Who by, shipmate?"

"Aye!" I cried, "who is it — what? 'T is a thing that flits i' the dark and with never a sound, that watches and listens. It mounted the ladder yonder scarce a moment since plain to my sight —"

"Yet I saw nothing, Martin. And not a soul stirring save the watch forward, the steersman aft, and myself —"

"Why, then I 'm verily mad!" said I.

"Not you, shipmate, not you. 'T is nought but the solitude and darkness; they take many a man that way, so ha' done with 'em, Martin! My lady's offer of employ yet holdeth good, so list with me as master's mate; say but the word and —"

"No!" replied I fiercely. "Come what may, I take no service under an accursed Brandon!" Saying which, I got me to my feet and presently back to the haunted dark.

Thus the days dragged by all unmarked by me (that took no more heed of time) for my fevered restlessness gave place to a heaviness, a growing inertia that gripped me, mind and body; thus when not lost in troubled sleep I would lie motionless, staring dully at the dim flame of the lanthorn or blinking sightless on the dark.

This strange sickness (as hath been said) I then set

down to no more than confinement and my unwholesome situation, in the which supposition I was very far beside the mark, as you shall hear. For there now befell a thing that roused me from my apathy once and for all, and thereby saved me from miserably perishing and others with me, and the manner of it thus:

On a time as I lay 'twixt sleep and wake, my glance (and for no reason in the world) chanced upon that knot-hole in the opposite bulkhead, the which (as already told) I had wrought into the likeness of a great eye. Now, as I stared at it, the thing seemed, all at once, to grow instinct with life and to stare back at me. I continued to view it (dully enough) until little by little I became aware of something strange about it, and then as I watched this (that was no more than a knot-hole) the thing winked at me. Thinking this but some wild fancy or a trick of the light I lay still, watching it beneath my lowered lids, and thus I suddenly caught the glitter of the thing as it moved and knew it for a very bright, human eye that watched me through the knot-hole. Now this may seem a very small matter in the telling, but to me at that moment (overwrought by my long sojourn in the dark) it was vastly otherwise.

For maybe a full minute the eye stared at me, fixed and motionless and with a piercing intensity, then suddenly was gone, and I lying there, my flesh a-tingle, my heart quick-beating in a strange terror so that I marvelled to find myself so shaken. Leaping up in sudden fierce anger I wrenched open the door and rushed forth, only to fall headlong over some obstacle; and, lying there bruised and dazed, heard the soft thud and scamper of rats in the dark hard by. So I got me back to my bunk and, lying there, fell to a gloomy reflection. And the more I thought, the fiercer grew my anger that any should dare so to spy upon me.

Thus it was in one of my blackest humours that Godby found me when, having set down the victuals he had brought, he closed the crazy door and seated himself on

the cask that served me as chair and bent to peer at me where I lay.

"Mart'n," said he, speaking almost in a whisper, "be ye awake at last?" For answer I cursed him heartily. "Avast, pal!" said he, shaking his head. "Look 'ee, Mart'n, 'tis in my mind the devil 's aboard this ship —"

"And what then?" I demanded angrily. "Am I a raree show to be peeped at and watched and spied upon?"

"Anan, pal — watched, d' ye say?"

"Aye, stared at through the knot-hole yonder a while since by you or Penfeather."

"Never knowed there was a knot-hole, Mart'n," said he in the same hushed voice and staring at the thing, "and as for Cap'n Adam, he aren't been anigh you this two days. But 'tis all one, pal, all one — this ship do be haunted. And as for eyes a-watching of ye, Mart'n, who should it be but this here ghost as walketh the ship o' nights and makes away wi' good men."

"How d' ye mean?" I questioned, reaching for the ale he had brought. "What talk is this of ghosts?"

"What 's yon?" he whispered, starting up, as a rustling sounded beyond the door.

"Mere rats, man!"

"Lord love ye, Mart'n," said he, glancing about him, "'t is a chancy place this. I don't know how ye can abide it —"

"I 've known worse!" said I.

"Then ye don't believe in spectres, Mart'n — ghosts, pal, nor yet phantoms?"

"No, I don't!"

"Well, Mart'n, there be strange talk among the crew o' something as do haunt the 'tween-decks —"

"Aye, I 've overheard some such!" I nodded. "But, look ye, I 've haunted the ship myself of late."

"And yet you 've seen nowt o' this thing, pal?"

"No. What thing should I see?"

"Who knows, Mart'n? But the sea aren't the land, and here on these wild wastes o' waters there 's chancy

things beyond any man's wisdom as any mariner 'll — ha, wha 's yon?" said he under his breath and whipping round, knife in hand. "'T was like a shoeless foot, Mart'n — creeping murder — 'T is there again!" Speaking, he tore open the door, and I saw his knife flash as he sprang into the darkness beyond; as for me I quaffed my ale. Presently back he came, clapped to the door (mighty careful) and, sinking upon the upturned cask, mopped at his brow.

"Content you, Godby," said I, "here be no ghosts —"

"Soft, lad — speak soft!" he whispered. "For — Lord love you, Mart'n, 't is worse than ghosts as I do fear! Dog bite me, pal, here 's been black and bloody doings aboard us this last two nights."

"How so, Godby?" I questioned, lowering my voice in turn as I met his look.

"I mean, lad, as this thing — call it ghost or what ye will — has took three men these last two nights. There 's Perks o' Deptford, McLean as hails from Leith and Treliving the Cornishman — three good men, Mart'n — lost, vanished — gone! And oh, pal, wi' never a mark or trace to tell how!"

"Lost? D' ye mean — overboard?"

"No, Mart'n, I mean — lost! And each o' them i' the middle watch — the sleepy hour, Mart'n, just afore dawn. In a fair night, pal, wi' a calm sea — these men vanish and none to see 'em go! And all of 'em prime sailormen and trusty. The which, Mart'n, sets a cove to wondering who 'll be next —"

"But are ye sure they are gone —"

"Aye, Mart'n, we 've sought 'em alow and aloft, all over the ship, save only this hole o' yourn — the which you might ha' known had ye slept less —"

"Have I slept so much, then?"

"Pal, you 've done little else since you came aboard, seemingly. All yesterday, as I do know, you slept and never stirred nor took so much as bite or sup — and I know, because while we was a-turning out the hold, a-seekin'

and a-searchin', I come and took a look at ye every now and then, and here 's you a-lyin' like a dead man but for your snoring."

"Here 's strange thing and mighty strange! For until I came aboard I was ever a wondrous light sleeper, Godby —"

"Why, 't is the stench o' this place — faugh! Come aloft and take a mouthful o' good, sweet air, pal."

"You say you sought these men everywhere — even down here in the hold?"

"Aye, alow and aloft, every bulkhead and timber from trucks to keelson!"

"And all this time I was asleep, Godby?"

"Aye — like a log, Mart'n."

"And breathing heavily?"

"Aye, ye did so, pal, groaning ye might call it — aye, fit to chill a man's good blood!"

"And neither you nor Adam nor the others thought to search this dog hole of mine?"

"Lord love ye — no, Mart'n! How should three men hide here?"

"Three men? Aye, true enough!" said I, clasping my head to stay the rush and hurry of my thoughts.

"Come aloft, pal, 't is a fair evening and the fine folk all a-supping in the great cabin. Come into the air."

"Yes," I nodded, "yes, 't will clear my head and I must think, Godby, I must think. Reach me my doublet," said I, for now I felt myself all shivering as with cold. So Godby took up the garment where it lay and held it out to me; but all at once let it fall and, drawing back, stood staring down at it, and all with never a word; whiles I sat crouched upon my bed, my head between my clenched fists and my mind reeling beneath the growing horror of the thought that filled me. And now, even as this thought took dreadful shape and meaning — even as suspicion grew to certainty — I heard Godby draw a gasping breath, saw him reach a stealthy, fumbling hand behind him and open the door and then, leaping backwards, he was swal-

lowed in the dark and, with a hurry of stumbling feet, was gone.

But I scarcely heeded his going or the manner of it, so stunned was I by the sudden realisation of the terror had haunted my ghastly slumbers and evil wakings, a terror that (if my dreadful speculations were true) was very real after all, a peril deadly and imminent.

The truth of which I now (and feverishly) set myself to prove beyond all doubt, and reached for the lanthorn. Now in so doing my foot caught in the doublet lying where Godby had dropped it and I picked it up out of the way; but as I lifted it into the light I let it fall again (even as Godby had done) and now staring down at it, felt my flesh suddenly a-creep for, as it lay there at my feet, I saw upon one sleeve a great, dark stain that smeared it up from wrist to elbow, the hideous stain of new-spilt blood.

CHAPTER XVI

Concerning the Mark of a Bloody Hand and How I Lay in the Bilboes on Suspicion of Murder

It was with an effort at last that I dragged my gaze from the hateful thing at my feet only to meet the wide stare of that great eye my knife had wrought and (albeit no human eye now glittered there), yet it seemed none the less to watch my every move so persistently that I snatched off my neckerchief and pinning it against the bulkhead with my knife, hid the thing from sight. Which done, I spurned my blood-stained doublet into a corner and, getting to hands and knees with the light beside me, began my search.

My bunk was formed of boards supported by four upended casks and stretched the whole length of my small chamber; upon these boards was a pallet covered by a great blanket that hung down to the very flooring; lifting this, I advanced the lanthorn and so began to examine very narrowly this space beneath my bed. And first I noticed that the flooring hereabouts was free of dust as it had been new-swept, and presently in the far corner espied a blurred mark that as I looked, took grim form and semblance; stooping nearer I stared at this in the full glare of the lanthorn, then shrank back (as well I might), for now I saw this mark was indeed the print of a great, bloody hand open at full stretch. Crouching thus, I felt again all the horror I had known in my dreams, that dread of some unseen, haunting presence seeming to breathe in the very air about me, a feeling of something evil that moved and crept in the dark beyond the door, of ears

that hearkened to my every move and eyes that watched me unseen. And this terror waxed and grew until, hearing a faint stirring behind me, I whirled about in panic to see the neckerchief gently a-swing against the bulkhead where I had pinned it; and though this was caused by no more than the motion of the ship (as I judged), yet in my then state of mind I whipped out my pistol and, levelling at the knot-hole, pulled the trigger, whereon was a mere flash in the pan and no more; this of itself steadied me and, sitting on my bed, I found that the charge had been withdrawn. Laying by the useless weapon (for I had neither powder nor ball) I fell to profound meditation. And now indeed many things were plain; here (methought) had been the ghost, here had lain the murderer of three men, here in the one and only safe place for him in the whole ship, viz. — beneath my bed, the while I lay there in drugged sleep. It would be simple matter to steal hither in my absence and drug my food and would explain the strange nausea had so afflicted me of late. Here then I had the secret of my day-long sleeping, my vapours and black humours; here the explanation of my evil dreams and ghastly visions while Death, in human guise, crept about my couch or stooped above my unconscious form. But (I reasoned) I was not to be murdered, since I was of more use to him alive than dead and for three reasons (as I judged). First, that in his stealthy comings and goings he might be mistaken for me and thus left alone; secondly, that dressed in my habit he might haply father his crimes on me; and thirdly, that I (lying here drugged and asleep) might afford him the one and only escape from pursuit and capture. And yet (thought I) what manner of man (or rather devil) should this be who, clad in my doublet, could make away with three lusty fellows and no one the wiser? Hereupon (and all in a flash) I seemed to see again the great, black ship drifting down on us in the river and the man who rowed the skiff with the misshapen bundle in the stern sheets — the bundle that had vanished so inexplicably —

"By the living God," said I in a whisper, "here's an end to all the mystery at last!" And so remained a great while sitting motionless on my bed, being mightily cast down and utterly confounded. Rousing myself at last I drew my knife from the bulkhead and put out the light; then very cautiously set wide the door and, thus lapped in the pitchy dark (and mighty thankful for the good chain shirt beneath my jerkin), stood holding my breath to listen. But hearing no more than the usual stir and bustle of the ship, I stole forward silent in my stockinged feet, and groping before me with my left hand, the knife clenched in my right, began to steal towards the ladder. And now, despite shirt of mail, I felt a cold chill that crept betwixt my twitching shoulder blades as I went, for that which I feared was more hateful than any knife.

Howbeit, reaching the ladder, I got me to the orlop (and mighty thankful) and so to the upper deck to find a wondrous fair night breathing a sweet and balmy air and with a round moon uprising against a great plenitude of stars. The moon was low as yet and, taking advantage of the shadows, I got me into the gloom of the mainmast where the boats were stowed; and here (being well screened from chance view) I sat me down to drink in the glory of sea and sky, and to wait for chance of speech with Adam. And huge joy was it to behold these vast waters as they heaved to a slumberous swell and all radiant with the moon's loveliness; or, gazing aloft, through the maze of ropes and rigging, I marvelled at the glory of the heavens set with their myriad starry fires. And, contrasting all this with the place of black horror whence I had come, I fell to a very ecstasy. And now, even as I sat thus lost in pleasing wonderment, from the quarter-deck hard by came the sweet, throbbing melody of a lute touched by skilled fingers and therewith a voice richly soft and plaintive, yet thrilling with that strange, vital ring which had first arrested me and which I should have known the world over. So she sang an air that I knew not, yet methought it

wondrous sweet; anon she broke off, all at once, and fell to singing the song I had heard her sing before now, viz:

"A poor soul sat sighing by a green willow tree."

Now as I hearkened, my gaze bent aloft, the starry heavens grew all suddenly blurred and misty on my sight, and I knew again that deep yearning for a life far different from that I (in my blind selfishness) had marked out for myself. "Here truly" (thought I) "is one of Godby's 'times of stars' the which are good times, being times of promise for all that are blessed with eyes to see — saving only myself who (though possessing eyes) am yet not as other men, being indeed one set apart and dedicated to a just act of vengeance. But for this, I too might have been happy perchance and with a hope of greater happiness to be — "

Something the like of this was in my thoughts while the song was a-singing, and I half-blinded by tears that would not be blinked away. Howbeit, the song ending, I was aware of a man's voice something high-pitched and precise.

"I vow and protest, dear madam, 't is rare — a night angelic and an angel here to sing us to an ecstasy —"

"Faith, Joan," said another voice, "your singing might draw any man's heart out of him, sweet cousin — "

"And that is but bald truth, I vow, my lady!" spoke a third.

"Why, then, gentlemen," replied she, laughing, "here's an angel will to bed ere so ill a chance befall you."

Now here (being minded to steal a look upon her) I rose and, creeping to the great mast, edged myself into the shadow and so beheld one that crouched there already and knew him for that same red-headed fellow I had belaboured with the rope's end. He was staring up at the quarter-deck and, following his look, I saw my lady stand leaning upon the rail, her shapely figure outlined against the moonlight, her face upraised to the sky. So stood she awhile, the gentlemen beside her (very brave in their velvets and new-fangled great periwigs) until came her maid

Marjorie; then she sighed, acknowledged the gentlemen's bows and flourishes with a graceful curtsey and, bidding them a laughing "good night", went her way, her shapely arm about Marjorie's trim waist. Hereupon the red-headed fellow uttered a sound 'twixt a sigh and groan and, beholding him now as he yet stared after her, I saw his face convulse and a look in his eyes as he tongued his lips as made my very gorge rise, and I crept a pace nearer.

"Be that you, Smiler?" said he, his gaze still fixed. "Oh, mate, yon's a rare, dainty bit — a sweet armful, Smiler — "

"Dog!" I cried in sudden, choking fury. At this he leapt back, hardly escaping my fist.

"Ha — is't you again?" cried he, and with the words sprang at me and fetched me a staggering buffet in the mouth. At this (forgetting all prudence) I closed with him and, heedless of his blows, secured the wrestling grip I sought and wrenching him down and across my knee, saw his face suddenly be-splashed with the blood from my cut mouth the while I strove to choke him to silence. But he struggled mightily, and thrice he cried "murder" in despite of me, whereupon the cry was taken up here and there, until the very ship seemed to roar "murder."

Followed a rush of feet, a confusion of voices all about me and, loosing my adversary, I reeled back to the mast under a rain of blows.

"Stand away — back all!" cried a voice. "Gi'e me a shot at the rogue!" and the muzzle of a caliver was thrust into my face only to be dashed aside as Adam sprang before me.

"Hold off!" said he, whereupon they shrank back from me, one and all, before his levelled pistol, and there came a moment's silence wherein I heard Godby utter a gasp and, letting fall the caliver, he stared at me agape. "Here's no murderer, ye fools!" said Adam, scowling round on them. "'T is no more than — ha, way for Sir Rupert — make way for the Captain, there!"

"Pray what's to do, Master Penfeather?" demanded

Sir Rupert, hasting forward with drawn sword and the three gentlemen behind him, "What's all this riot?"

"Nought but a stowaway rogue, Sir Rupert, and one beknown to me in England."

"Ha!" said Sir Rupert, stroking a curl of his great peruke. "How cometh he brawling with the watch?"

"Look'ee, my masters," cried the red-headed fellow (gasping and making great to-do of gurgling and clasping his throat where I had squeezed him), "look'ee, sirs, at my bloody face — all bloodied I be and nigh done for by yon murdering rogue. Here's me on my watch and no thought o' harm, and suddenly out o' nowhere he takes him and grips me from behind and would ha' murdered me as he murdered t' others!"

"Ha!" cried Sir Rupert, "the man reeks blood, observe, Master Penfeather, and here's grave charge beside!"

Now as I leaned there against the mast I saw a figure flit down the quarter ladder and fain would have fled, yet, seeing this vain, hung my head and cowered in a very agony of mortified pride.

"And you know this man, you say, Master Adam?" questioned Sir Rupert.

"Aye, I do, sir, for a desperate fellow, and so doth my Lady Brandon — and yourself also."

"Ha? Bring him forward where I may get look of him." The which being done, Sir Rupert starts back with sword point raised.

"By Heaven!" he cried. "How cometh this fellow aboard?"

"A stowaway, as I said, sir," quoth Adam. "You mind him very well, it seemeth."

"Aye, verily!" said Sir Rupert, tapping me lightly with his sword as I stood between my captors. "Ha — You're the rogue stood i' the pillory!"

"Aye!" I nodded, scowling at his dainty person. "And you're the one that set me there!"

"'Tis a rogue ingrain," said Sir Rupert, frowning in

turn. "Oh, a very desperate fellow, as you say, Master Adam, and like enough the murderer we are seeking—" Hereupon I laughed and was kicked (unseen) therefor by Adam.

"My lady!" said he, turning where she stood hard by, "you have seen this fellow, I think—"

"Yes," answered she readily, "and indeed, Cousin Rupert, I know more of this—of him than you do and very sure am I he is no murderer—nor ever will be!" Here for a moment her glance rested on me and, meeting that look, I forgot my wounded vanity and degradation awhile.

"Sweet my lady," said Sir Rupert, "your gentle woman's heart may not brook scenes the like of this. Go seek thy tender pillow and leave such to us of sterner mould—"

"Nay, cousin, my gentle woman's heart knoweth innocence from guilt, methinks, and here standeth innocent man, stowaway though he be."

"Why, then, as stowaway will I entreat him, fair cousin. Master Penfeather, clap him in irons till the morning, away with him—nay, I myself will see him safely lodged." Here, and without further parley, I was led below, watched by the whole ship's company, and so to a dismal place abaft the lazarette where the armourer, Master Taffery, duly locked me into the manacles (arm and leg) beneath the eyes of Penfeather and Sir Rupert who, seeing me thus secure, presently left me to darkness and my solitary reflections.

Howbeit, after some while I heard the sound of key turning and Adam reëntered, bearing a light; having locked the door on us, he set down the lanthorn on the floor and, seating himself on the bench whereto I was shackled falls into a passion of cursing both in English, Spanish (and Indian for aught I know), for never had I heard the like words or such deep fervour.

"Adam," said I (he being at a pause), "'t is hard to think you were ever a student of divinity!"

Hereupon he glanced at me from the corners of his eyes and shook his head.

"Your face is bloody, Martin; are ye hurt?"

"My belly 's empty, Adam."

"Why, I guessed as much. Godby's bringing ye the wherewithal to fill it. In the meantime I 'll free you o' your bilboes awhile, though I must lock you up again that you may be found snug and secure in the morning." So saying, he took a key from his pocket and therewith set me at liberty. "Ah, Martin," quoth he, as I stretched myself, "why must ye go a-raising of tumults above deck under our very noses? Here 's a mighty ill plight you 've got yourself into, and here 's me a-wondering how I am to get ye out again. Here 's been murder done and, look 'ee, this coxcombly captain hath got it into his skull that you 're the murderer — aye, and what 's worse, every soul aboard likewise save only Godby and myself —"

"And my lady!" said I.

"True, shipmate, true! She spoke for ye, as I guessed she might."

"And how should you guess this, Adam?"

"By adding one and one, Martin. But even so, comrade, even though she stand by you — what can she do or Godby and I for that matter 'gainst a whole ship's company crazed wi' panic fear — fear, aye, and small wonder, Martin! Death is bad enough, murder 's worse, but for three hearty fellows to disappear and leave no trace —"

"Aye, but was there no trace, Adam?"

"None, shipmate, none!"

"No blood anywhere?"

"Never a spot, shipmate!"

"Why, then, is there ever a man aboard with a wounded hand, Adam?"

"Not one to my knowing, and I 've turned up the crew on deck twice these last two days — every man and boy, but saw not so much as cut finger or stained garment among 'em — and I 've sharp eyes, Martin. But why d 'ye ask?"

"Because the man who made away with these three fellows was wounded in the hand, Adam,—howbeit that hand was bloody."

"Hand, shipmate," said Penfeather softly; "would it be a right hand—ha?"

"It was!" I nodded. "The mark of a great right hand."

"Aye, aye!" said Adam, pinching his chin. "A right hand, Martin. And where was the mark, d' ye say?"

"Beneath my bed."

"Bed, Martin—your bed!" Here he caught his breath and rose up and stood looking down at me betwixt narrowed lids and a-pinching at his square chin.

"Aye—there, Adam—the only place in the ship you never thought to search—there he lay safe hid and I above him in a drugged sleep."

"Drugged!" said Adam, betwixt shut teeth. "Aye—drugged—crass fool that I was not to ha' guessed it ere this—" And now he fell silent and stood very still, only his sinewy fingers pinched and pinched at his chin as he stared blindly down at the floor. So now I told him of my fevered dreams and black imaginations, of my growing fears and suspicions, of the eye had watched me through the knot-hole and of the man on the river with the boat, wherein was the great misshapen bundle which had vanished just after the black ship ran foul of us.

"Lord!" said Adam at last. "So the mystery is resolved! The matter lies plain as a pikestaff. Ha, Martin, we've shipped the devil aboard, it seems!"

"Who weareth a steel hook, Adam!"

"And yet, Martin, and yet," said he, looking at me from the corners of his eyes, "herein, if we seek far enough, we may find the hand of Providence, I think—"

"How?" said I, "Providence, d' ye call it?"

"Aye, Martin—if we do but seek far enough!" Here he turned in answer to a furtive rapping and, opening the door, I heard Godby's voice. "Come in, man, come in," called Adam; "here's only Martin—"

"Aye," quoth I heartily, "come in, God-be-here Jenkins that was my friend." At this in he comes unwillingly enough and with never so much as a glance in my direction.

"Here 's the wittles, Cap'n," said he and, setting down the food and drink he had brought, turned away.

"What, Godby, ha' ye no word for a poor murderer in his abasement?" says I. Whereat he shook his head mighty gloomy and keeping his gaze averted. As for Adam, he stood pinching his chin the while his quick, bright eyes darted from one to other of us.

"How, are ye going and never a word?" quoth I as Godby crossed to the door.

"Aye, I am!" said he, with gaze still averted.

"Why, you left me in mighty hurry last time, Godby."

"Aye, I did!"

"Why, then, tell us wherefore — speak out, man."

"Not I, Mart'n, not I!" and, touching his bonnet to Penfeather, Godby hasted away.

"Ha!" said Adam, closing and locking the door. "And what 's the riddle, Martin?"

"My doublet. Godby, chancing to take it up, finds it all a-smear with blood and incontinent suspects me for this black murderer, which comes hard since here 's an end of Godby's faith and my friendship."

"Why, look now, Martin, his suspicions are in reason, seeing that what with drugs, deviltries and what not, you 've been mighty strange o' late and more unlovely company than usual, d' ye see!"

"Howbeit," said I, scowling and reaching for the food, "here 's an end to my friendship for Godby. Now as to you — what d' you say?"

"I think, shipmate, that your doublet bloody and you the grimly, desperate, gallowsy, hell-fire rogue you strive so hard to appear, Martin, I say here 's enough to hang you ten times over. One thing is sure, you must leave this ship."

"Not I, Adam!"

"The longboat's astern, victualled and ready—"

"No matter!"

"'T will be no hard matter to get you safe away, Martin."

"Howbeit, I stay here!" said I, mighty determined. "I'm no murderer!"

"But you're a man to hang, and hanged you'll be and you can lay to that, d' ye see?"

"So be it!" said I.

"Very fine, shipmate, but as I was saying, the longboat is towing astern, a good boat and well stored. The moon will be down in an hour—"

"And what of it?" I demanded.

"'T will be easy for you to slip down from the stern gallery."

"Never in the world!" quoth I.

"And as luck will have it, Martin, Bartlemy's Island—our island—lieth scarce eighty miles southwesterly. Being thither you shall come on our treasure by the aid of the chart I shall give you and, leaving the gold, take only the coffers of jewels—"

"You waste your breath, Adam!"

"Then, shipmate, with these jewels aboard you shall stand away for another island that beareth south a day's sail—"

"Look you, Adam," said I, clenching my fists, "once and for all, I do not leave this ship, happen what may—"

"Aye, but you will, shipmate."

"Ha, d' ye think to force me, then?"

"Not I, Martin, but circumstances shall."

"What circumstances?"

Here and all at once, Adam started up as again there came a soft knocking at the door. "Who's there?" he cried. And then in my ear, "'T is she, Martin, as I guess, though sooner than I had expected,—into the bilboes with you." Thus whispering and with action incredibly quick, he clapped and locked me back in my shackles, whisked food, platter and bottle into a dark

corner and crossed to the door. "Who's there?" he demanded gruffly. Ensued a murmur, whereupon he turned the key, set wide the door and fell back bowing, bonnet in hand, all in a moment.

"Good Master Adam!" said she gently, "pray you leave us awhile and let none intrude on us." At this Adam bowed again very low with a whimsical glance at me and went out, closing the door behind him.

CHAPTER XVII

Concerning the Princess Damaris

For a while she stood looking down on me and I, meeting that look, glanced otherwhere yet, conscious of her regard, stirred uneasily so that my irons rattled dismally.

"Sir," said she at last, but there I stayed her.

"Madam, once and for all, I am no 'sir'!"

"Martin Conisby," she amended in the same gentle voice, "Master Penfeather telleth me you refused the honourable service I offered — I pray you wherefore?"

"Because I 've no mind to serve a Brandon."

"Yet you steal aboard my ship, Master Conisby; you eat the food my money hath paid for! Doth this suffice your foolish, stubborn pride?" Here, finding nought to say, I scowled at my fetters and held my peace, whereat she sighed a little, as I had been some fretful, peevish child. "Why are you here in my ship?" she questioned patiently. "Was it for vengeance? Tell me," she demanded, "is it that you came yet seeking your wicked vengeance?"

"Mine is a just vengeance!"

"Vengeance, howsoever just, is God's — leave it unto God!" At this I was silent again, whereupon she continued, her voice more soft and pleading: "Even though my father had — indeed — wronged you and yours — how shall his death profit you?"

"Ha!" I cried, staring up at her troubled face. "Can it be you know this for very truth at last? Are you satisfied of my wrongs and know my vengeance just? Have ye proof of Sir Richard's black treachery — confess!"

Now at this, her eyes quailed before my look and she shrank away.

"God forgive him!" she whispered, bowing stately head.

"Speak!" said I fiercely. "Have ye the truth of it at last?"

"'T is that bringeth me here to you, Martin Conisby, to confess this wrong on his behalf and on his behalf to offer such reparation as I may. Alas! for the bodily sufferings you did endure we can never atone, but — in all other ways —"

"Never!" said I, scowling. "What is done — is done — and I am — what I am. But for yourself his sin toucheth you no whit."

"How?" cried she passionately. "Am I not his flesh — his blood? 'T was but lately I learned the truth from his secret papers — and — oh, 't was all there — even the price he paid to have you carried to the plantations! So am I come pleading your forgiveness for him and for me — to humble myself before you — see thus — thus, upon my knees —"

Now beholding all the warm beauty of her as she knelt humbly before me, the surge and tumult of her bosom, the quiver of her red lips, the tearful light of her eyes, I was moved beyond speech, and ever she knelt there, bowed and shaken in her mute abasement.

"My Lady Joan," said I at last, "for your pure self I can have nought to forgive — I — that am all unworthy to touch the latchet of your shoe. Rise, I pray —"

"And for — my father?" she whispered. "Alas, my poor, miserable father —"

"Speak not of him!" I cried. "Needs must there be hate and enmity betwixt us until the end." So was silence awhile nor did I look up, dreading to see her grief.

"Your face is cut, Martin!" said she at last, very softly. "Suffer that I bathe it." Now turning in amaze, I saw her yet upon her knees, looking up at me despite her falling tears. "Wilt suffer me to bathe it, Martin?"

asked she, her voice unshaken by any sob. I shook my head; but rising she crossed to the door and came back, bearing a small pannikin of water. "I brought this for the purpose," said she.

"Nay indeed, I—I am well enough—"

"Then will I make you better!"

"No!" said I angrily.

"Yes!" said she patiently, but setting dimpled chin at me.

"And wherefore, madam?"

"Because I'm so minded, sir!" So saying she knelt close beside me and fell a-bathing my bruised face as she would, and I helpless to stay her, yet marvelling within me at the gentle touch of her soft hands and the tender pity in her tear-wet eyes. "Martin," said she, "as I do thus cherish your hurts, you shall one day, mayhap, cherish your enemy's—"

"Never!" said I. "You can know me not at all to think so—"

"I know you better than you guess, Martin. You think it strange belike and unmaidenly in me that I should seek you thus, that your name should come so readily to my lip? But I have remembered the name 'Martin' for the sake of a boy, long years since, who found a little maid (she was just ten years old), found her lost and wandering in a wood, very woeful and frightened and forlorn. And this boy seemed very big and strong (he was just eleven, he said) and was armed with a bow and arrows 'to shoot outlaws.' And yet he was very gentle and kindly, laying by his weapons the better to comfort her sorrows and dry her tears. So he brought her to a cave he called his 'castle' and showed her a real sword he kept hidden there (albeit a very rusty one) and said he would be her knight to do great things for her some day. Then he brought her safely home; and he told her his name was Martin, and she said hers was Damaris—"

"Damaris!" said I, starting.

"Often after this they used to meet by a corner of the

old park wall where he had made a place to go up and down by — for six months, I think, they played together daily — and once he fought a great, rough boy on her behalf, and when the boy had run away she bathed her champion's hurts in a little brook — bathed them with her scarf as thus I do yours. At last she was sent away to a school, and the years passed but she never forgot the name of Martin, though he forgot her quite — but — you — you remember now, Martin. Oh, you remember now?" said she with a great sob.

"Aye, I remember now!" quoth I hoarsely.

"It is for sake of this boy, Martin, so brave, so strong, yet so very gentle and kindly — for him and all he might have been that I pray you forego your vengeance — I beseech you to here renounce it — "

"Never!" I cried, clenching my shackled hands. "But for my enemy this boy might now be as other men — 'stead of outcast rogue and scarred galley slave; he might have come to love and win love — to have known the joy of life and its fulness! Howbeit he must go his way, rogue and outcast to the end."

"No!" she cried. "No! The wrong may be undone — must — shall be — wounds will heal and even scars will fade with time."

"Scars of the body, aye — belike!" said I. "But there be scars of the mind, wounds of the soul shall never heal — so shall my just vengeance sleep not nor die whiles I have life!"

Here for a while she was silent again, and I saw a tear fall sparkling.

"And yet," said she at last and never stirring from her humble posture, "and yet I have faith in you still for, despite all your cruel wrongs and grievous suffering, you are so — young, headstrong and wilful and very desolate and forlorn. Thus whiles I have life my faith in you shall sleep not nor die, yet greatly do I pity — "

"Pity?" said I fiercely. "You were wiser to hate and see me hang out of hand."

"Poor soul!" she sighed and, rising, laid one white hand upon my shackled fist. "And yet mayhap you shall one day find again your sweet and long-lost youth—meanwhile strive to be worthy a sorrowing maid's honest pity."

"Pity?" said I again. "'T is akin to love—so give me hate; 't is thing most natural 'twixt your blood and mine."

"Poor soul!" she repeated, viewing me with her great, calm eyes, albeit their lashes were wet with tears. "How may I hate one so wretched?" Here, seeing mayhap how the words stung me, she must needs repeat them: "Poor, wretched soul, thou 'rt far—far beneath my hate."

"Belike you 'll come to learn in time!" said I, beside myself. At this I saw the white hand clench itself but her voice was tender as ever when she answered:

"Sorrow and suffering may lift a man to greatness if he be strong of soul or debase him to the brute if he be weak."

"Why, then," said I, "begone to your gallants and leave me to the brutes."

"Nay, first will I do that which brought me!" and she showed the key of my gyves.

"Let be!" I cried. "I seek no freedom at your hands—let be, I say!"

"As you will!" said she gently. "So endeth my hope of righting a great wrong. I have humbled myself to you to-night, Martin Conisby. I have begged and prayed you to forego your vengeance, to forgive the evil done, not so much for my father's sake as for your own, and this because of the boy I dreamed a man ennobled by his sufferings and one great enough to forgive past wrongs, since by forgiveness cometh regeneration. Here ends my dream—alas, you are but rogue and galley slave, after all. So shall I ever pity you greatly and greatly despise you!"

Then she turned slowly away and went from me, closing and locking the door, and left me once more in the black dark, but now full of yet blacker thoughts.

To be scorned by her! And she — a Brandon!

And now I (miserable wretch that I was), giving no thought to the possibility of my so speedy dissolution, raged in my bonds, wasting myself in futile imprecations against this woman who (as it seemed to me in my blind and brutish anger) had but come to triumph over me in my abasement. Thus of my wounded self-love did I make me a whip of scorpions whereby I knew an agony beyond expression.

CHAPTER XVIII

How I Came Out of my Bonds and of the Terrors of a Fire at Sea

The Devil, ever zealous for the undoing of poor Humanity, surely findeth no readier ally than the blind and merciless Spirit of Mortified Pride. Thus I, minding the Lady Joan's scornful look and the sting of her soft-spoke words, fell to black and raging fury and vowed that since rogue and galley slave she had named me, rogue she should find me in very truth henceforward, if I might but escape my perilous situation.

And now it was that Chance or Fate or the Devil sent me a means whereby I might put this desperate and most unworthy resolution into practice; for scarce had I uttered this vow when a key turned softly in the lock, the door opened and closed stealthily, and though I could not see (it being pitch-dark) I knew that some one stood within a yard of me, and all with scarce a sound and never a word. And when this silence had endured a while, I spoke sudden and harsh:

"What now? Is it the noose so soon, or a knife sooner?"

I heard a quick-drawn breath, a soft footfall, and a small hand, groping in the dark, touched my cheek and crept thence to my helpless, manacled fist. "Who is it?" I demanded, blenching from the touch. "Who is it? Speak!"

"Hush!" whispered a voice in my ear. "It be only me, master. Jimmy — little Jim as you was good to. Red Andy don't beat me no more; he be afeared o' you. Good to me you was, master, an' so 's she — took me to be her page, she 'ave — "

"Whom d' you mean, boy?"

"I mean Her! Her wi' the beautiful, kind eyes an' little feet! Her as sings! Her they calls 'my lady'— Her! Good t' me she is — an' so's you, so I be come to ye, master — "

"Ha — did she send you?"

"No, I just come to save you from being hung tomorrow like they says you must."

"And how shall you do this, boy?"

"First wi' this key, master — "

"Stay! Did she give you this key?"

"No, master — I took it!" So albeit 't was very dark, the boy very soon had freed me of my shackles; which done (and all a-quiver with haste), he seized my hand and tugged at it.

"Come master!" he whispered. "This way — this way!"

So with his little, rough hand in mine I suffered him to bring me whither he would in the dimness, for not a lanthorn burned anywhere, until at last he halted me at a ladder propped against a bulkhead and, mounting before, bade me follow. Up I climbed forthwith and so to a narrow trap or scuttle through which I clambered with no little to-do, and found myself in a strange place, the roof so low I could barely sit upright and so straight that I might barely lie outstretched.

"Lie you here, master!" he whispered. "And for the love o' God don't speak nor make a sound!" Saying which, he got him back through the scuttle, closing the trap after him, and I heard the clatter of the ladder as he removed it.

Hereupon, lying snug in my hiding place, I presently became aware of a sweetness that breathed upon the air, a fragrance very faint but vastly pleasing and fell a-wondering what this should be. My speculations were banished by the opening of a door near by, and a light appeared by which I saw myself lying in a narrow space shut off by a valance or curtain that yet showed a strip of

carpet beyond, and all at once upon this carpet came a little, buckled shoe. I was yet staring on this in dumb amaze when a voice spoke softly:

"Are you there, Martin Conisby? Hush, speak low, I do command you!"

For answer I dragged myself into the light and stared up at the Lady Joan Brandon.

"Where am I?" I demanded.

"In my cabin," said she, meeting my scowl with eyes serene and all untroubled. "I had you brought hither to save you—"

"To save me! Ha, you—you to save me—"

"Because you are not man enough to die yet," she went on in her calm, grave voice; "so I will save you alive that haply you may grow more worthy—"

"So 't was by your orders? The boy lied then!" said I, choking with my anger, "'T was you gave him the key! 'T was you bade him bring me hither—"

"Where none shall dare seek you!" answered she, all unmoved by my bitter rage. "So do I give you life, Martin Conisby, praying God you may find your manhood one day—"

"Life!" quoth I, getting to my feet. "My life at your hands? Now look ye, madam, rather will I hang unjustly, rather will I endure again the shame of the lash—aye, by God's light, rather will I rot in chains or perish of plague—than take my life at your hands. So now, madam, I 'll out o' this perfumed nest and hang if I must!" saying which I turned to the door, but she checked me with a gesture.

"Stay!" she commanded. "Would you shame me?" And now, though she fronted me with proud head erect, I saw her cheek flush painfully.

"Aye, verily!" quoth I. "A lady's honour is delicate ware and not to be cheapened by such poor rogue as I! Fear nothing, lady, I will go as—" I stopped all at once, as came footsteps without and a light tapping at the door.

"Who is it?" she called, lightly enough, and shot the bolt with nimble fingers.

"Only I, sweet coz," answered a gay voice. "And I come but to warn you not to venture on deck to-morrow till justice hath been done upon our prisoner."

"Shall you — hang him, Rupert?"

"Assuredly! 'T is a black rogue and merits a worse fate."

"Is he then tried and condemned already, Rupert?"

"Nay, though 't will be soon done. We have come on such evidence of his guilt as doth condemn him out of hand."

"What evidence, cousin?"

"His doublet all besmirched with his victims' blood. The man is a very devil and must hang at dawn. So, Joan, stir not abroad in the morning until I come to fetch you. A fair, good night, sweet coz, and sweet dreams attend thee!" And away trips Sir Rupert and leaves us staring on one another, she proud and gracious in all her dainty finery and I a very hang-dog fellow, my worn garments smirched by the grime of my many hiding places.

"Was this indeed your doublet?" she questioned at last.

"It was."

"How came it stained with blood?" For answer I shrugged my shoulders and turned away. "Have you nothing to say?"

"Nothing, madam."

"You would have me think you this murderer?"

"I would have you think of me none at all," I answered, and smiled to see how I had stirred her anger at last.

"Nay," sighed she, "needs must I think of you as the poor mean thing you are and pity you accordingly!"

"Howbeit," said I, scowling blacker than ever, "I will get me out of your sight —"

"Aye, but the ladder is gone!"

"No matter," said I, "better a broken neck to-night than a noose to-morrow. To-morrow, aye, the dawn is like to see an end of the feud and the Conisbys both together—"

"And so shameful an end!" said she. At this, I turned my back on her, for anger was very strong in me. So, nothing speaking, I got to my knees that I might come at the trap beneath her berth; but next moment I was on my feet, glaring round for some weapon to my defence, for on the air was sudden wild tumult and hubbub, a running of feet and confused shouting that waxed ever louder. Then, as I listened, I knew it was not me they hunted, for now was the shrill braying of a trumpet and the loud throbbing of a drum.

"Martin—oh, Martin Conisby!" She stood with hands clasped and eyes wide in a dreadful expectancy. "What is it?" she panted. "Oh, what is it? Hark—what do they cry!"

Rigid and motionless we stood to listen; then every other emotion was 'whelmed and lost in sudden, paralysing fear as, above the trampling rush of feet, above the shrill blast of tucket and rolling of drum, we caught the awful word "Fire!"

"Now, God help us all!" cried she, wringing her hands; then sinking to her knees, she leaned, half-swooning, against the door, yet I saw her pallid lips moving in passionate supplication.

As for me (my first panic over) I sat me on her bed revolving how I might turn the general confusion to the preservation of my life. In this I was suddenly aroused by my lady's hand on my bowed shoulder.

"Hark!" cried she. "Hark where they cry for aid!"

"Why, so they do," said I. "And so they may!"

"Then come, let us out. You are a strong man, you will help to save the ship—"

"And hang thereafter? Not I, madam!"

"Will you do nothing?" cried she, clenching her hands.

"Verily, madam. I shall do my earnest endeavour to

preserve this poor rogue's body o' mine from noose and flame. But as for the ship — let it burn, say I."

"Spoke like a very coward!" said she in bitter scorn. "And a coward is selfish always." So saying, she crossed to the door and reached her hand to the bolt; but in a leap I was beside her and caught this hand, prisoning it there.

"Hark 'ee, madam!" quoth I. "You tell me that to hang is a shameful death, and the noose is as good as round my neck. But, before God, madam, I 'll see this ship go up in flame and perish with it ere that noose shall strangle the life out o' me and my wrongs unavenged. So the ship may burn an' it will. Meantime do you seek your salvation and leave me to seek mine!" Then opening the door I stood aside to give her way; instead she stood a moment looking on me great-eyed.

"Oh, blind!" said she at last. "To treasure life for your wicked vengeance! Oh, blind, blind!" Then, and very suddenly, she sped out and away.

Left alone, I stood hearkening to the distant uproar and casting about in my mind how best I might contrive my preservation. And now in my desperate need it seemed there was but one hope for me and this but slender, viz: to steal myself up to Adam's lodgment under the poop and that as soon as might be. To this end I stepped forth of the cabin and so into a narrow passageway with divers doors to right and left that opened upon other cabins, in one of which I espied a cloak and feathered hat lying where their owner had dropped them. Whipping the cloak about me, I clapped on the hat and, staying for no more, hasted on, breathing an air acrid with drifting smoke. Reaching a broad stairway I climbed at speed and found myself out upon the lofty poop whence I might look down on the decks through a haze of smoke that poured up through the after hatchway, mounting in billowy wreaths against the splendour of the moon. Here it seemed was gathered the whole ship's company with mighty stir and to-do and none with eyes to spare for me.

Howbeit, I stayed for no second glance but, running to Adam's cabin, found the door unlocked, the which I closed after me, in the doing of which I noticed (to my comfort) that this door was mighty thick and strong and in it moreover a loophole newly cut, with others in the bulkheads to right and left and all very neatly plugged from within; and what with this and the musquetoons that stood in racks very orderly, the place, small though it was, had all the virtues of a fort or citadel. Here then, so far as might be, I was safe whatever chanced, since I had but to lift the trap in the floor and descend into the roundhouse below whence I might gain the stern gallery and so the sea itself. And now, laying by the hat and cloak, I cast myself on Adam's bed and there outstretched in great content, hearkening to the distant voices and tramp of feet where they laboured to put out the fire.

Little by little these sounds became merged with the droning of the wind and the never-ceasing surge and hiss of the seas; lulled by this and the sense of my comparative safety, I presently fell a-slumbering. And sleeping thus, dreamed myself young again and playing with the child Damaris, thrilling to the clasp of her little, childish hands, joying in the tones of her clear, sweet child-voice, — she that grown-up I knew for none other than Joan Brandon.

"Lord love me, shipmate, here's you to hang at peep o' day and a-smiling in your dreams!"

"What — Adam!" said I, sitting up.

"In few short hours, Martin, here will be ninety odd souls earnestly seeking to swing you up to the mainyard, and you a-slumbering sweet as any innocent babe, and burn me, shipmate, I love you the better for 't!"

"What o' the fire, Adam?"

"Why, 't was an excellent fire, Martin, and smoked bravely! What's more, it served its divers purposes whiles it lasted."

"Is it out then, Adam?"

"This two hours."

"And what might you mean by its purposes?"

"Well, mayhap you were one o' them, Martin. Here's the second time fire hath served ye well, you'll mind."

"How!" I cried, starting to my feet. "Will you be telling me 't was you set this fire going?"

"As to the other purpose, shipmate, 't is yonder — hark to it!" And smiling grimly, Adam held up a sinewy finger as, from somewhere forward, rose a confused and dismal wailing.

"In Heaven's name, what's toward now, Adam?"

"The crew are singing, Martin, likewise they dance; presently they shall fall a-quarrelling, then grow pot-valiant, all in regular and accepted order. Already one poor rogue hath been aft to demand the women of us, d' ye see, and —"

"To demand the women!" said I in gasping astonishment.

"Aye, the women, Martin — my Lady Joan and her maid, d' ye see."

"God's love, Adam!" I cried, gripping his arm. "And you — what said you to the vile dog?"

"Nought! I shot him!"

"Is the mutiny broke out, then?"

"Not yet, shipmate, but 't is coming, aye, 't is coming, which is very well —"

"And what hath brought things to this pass?"

"Rum, Martin! The fire was in the storeroom where there is rum a-plenty, d' ye see, and what was to prevent the rogues making off with a keg or so that chanced to lie handy — not I, shipmate, not I!"

"And why not, in the Devil's name?"

"Because, Martin," said Adam, sitting at the table and beginning to set his papers in order, "because there's nought like liquor for putting the devil into a man, and of all liquor commend me to rum with a dash o' tobacco or gunpowder, d' ye see. We shall be heaving dead men overboard ere dawn, I judge, and all along o' this same rum, Martin. Black mutiny, murder and sudden death,

shipmate, and more 's the pity, say I. But if Providence seeth fit, why so be it."

"Providence!" quoth I, scowling down into his impassive face. "Dare ye talk of Providence? 'T was you set this bloody business a-foot."

"Aye, Martin, it was!" said he, nodding. "As to Providence — look 'ee now, if you can ape Providence to your own ends, which is vengeance and bloody murder, I can do as much for mine, which is to save the lives of such as stand true to me and the ship — not to mention the women. There 's Tressady skulking below, and I have but contrived that the mutiny should come in my time rather than his and theirs. As it is, we are prepared, fifteen stout lads lie i' the roundhouse below with musquetoon and fusee and every gun and swivel that will bear (falconet and paterero) aimed to sweep the waist when they rush, as rush they will, Martin, when the drink hath maddened 'em properly — "

"And having maddened them with your hellish decoctions, you 'll shoot the poor rogues down?"

"Aye, Martin, I will so, lest peradventure they shoot me. Then besides, shipmate, what o' the women? I have the Lady Joan and her maid to think on; 't would be an ill fate theirs in the hands of yon filthy rabblement. Hark to 'em yonder! Hark what they sing!"

For a while I could hear nought but a clamour of fierce shouts and hallooing, then, little by little this wild, hoarse tumult rose and swelled to a fierce chaunt:

"Some swam in rum to Kingdom Come
Full many a lusty fellow,
And since they 're sped, all stark and dead,
They 're flaming now in Hell-O
So cheerly O,
Hey cheerly O,
They 're burning down in Hell-O!"

"D' ye hear it, Martin, did ye hear it? Shoot the poor rogues, d' ye say? Sink me, but I will so if Fortune be so

kind. Yonder's short shrift and quick despatch for me, shipmate, and then — the women! Think of my Lady Joan writhing in their clutches. Hark'ee to the lewd rogues — 't is women now — hark to 'em!" And here again their vile song burst forth with much the same obscenity as I had once heard sung by Abnegation Mings in a wood and the which I will not here transcribe.

"Well, shipmate," said Adam, glancing up from his papers, "last of all, there's yourself! Here's you with the rope in prospect unless you quit this ship, and yonder, Martin, yonder is the longboat towing astern, all stored and ready, a calm sea and a fair wind — "

"No more o' that!" said I angrily.

"But will ye dangle in a noose, Martin, when you might be away in the longboat as tows astern of us and with a fair wind as I say and — "

"Have done!" said I, clenching my fists.

"'T will be the simplest thing in the world, Martin," he went on, leaning back in his chair and nodding up at me mighty pleasant. "Aye, a very simple matter for you to drop down from the stern gallery yonder, d' ye see, and setting a course southwesterly you should make our island in four and twenty hours or less, what with this wind and the sea so calm — "

"Never!" cried I in growing fury. "Come what will I stay aboard this ship until we reach our destination!"

"Hum!" said he, pinching his chin and eyeing me 'twixt narrowed lids. "Are ye still bent on nought but vengeance, then? Why, look'ee, Martin, 't is none so far to seek, for seeing you may not reach the father why not smite him through the daughter? She'd make fine sport for our beastly crew — hark to 'em roaring! Sport for them and a mighty full vengeance for you — "

The table betwixt us hampered my blow and then, as I strove to come at him, I brought up with the muzzle of his pistol within a foot of my brow.

"Easy, shipmate, easy!" said he, leaning back in his chair but keeping me covered.

"Damned rogue!" I panted.

"True!" he nodded. "True, Martin, vengeance is kin to roguery, d' ye see. If you 're for murdering the father what 's to hinder you from giving the proud daughter up to — steady, Martin, steady it is! Your sudden ways be apt to startle a timid man, and my finger 's on the trigger. Look 'ee now, shipmate, if your scheme of fine-gentlemanly vengeance doth not permit of such methods towards a woman, what 's to prevent you going on another tack and carrying her with you, safe from all chance of brutality? There 's stowage for her in the longboat which is a stout, roomy craft now towing astern, stored and victualled, a smooth sea, a fair wind — "

"Hark 'ee, Adam Penfeather," said I, choking with passion, "once and for all I bide on this ship until she brings up off Hispaniola."

"But then, Martin, she never will bring up off Hispaniola, not whiles I navigate her — "

"Ha!" I cried, "doth my lady know of this? Doth Sir Rupert?"

"Not yet, Martin."

"Then, by Heaven, they shall learn this very hour — "

"I think not, Martin."

"And I swear they shall. Let them hang me an they will, but first they shall hear you intend to seize the ship to your own purposes — aye, by God, they shall know you for the pirate you are!"

Now as I turned and strode for the door, I heard the sudden scrape of Adam's chair behind me and, whirling about, saw his pistol a-swing above my head, felt the vicious, staggering blow and, reeling to the door, sank weakly to my knees and thence seemed to plunge into a black immensity and knew no more.

CHAPTER XIX

Telleth How We Were Cast Adrift

I awoke to a wind on my brow, very pleasant and sweet, and in my ears the soft and drowsy ripple of water right soothing to hear and thus would have slumbered on but for another sound that broke out at intervals, a thunderous roar that seemed to shake me where I lay. Therefore I opened my eyes to see above me a great multitude of stars and lay staring up at them in vague and dreamy wonderment until, roused again by another thunderclap, I raised myself and saw I lay in the stern sheets of a large, open boat that rocked to a gentle swell and all about me a misty sea grey with the dawn. Now as I gazed around me, greatly troubled and amazed, I beheld, far away across these dim waters, a flash of red flame and after some while heard again the thunder of a gun.

Little by little, as the light waxed, I made out the loom of two ships and, despite the distance, I knew the foremost for the *Faithfull Friend*. Ever and anon would come the faint crack of caliver or petronel from her high poop and the thunder of her stern-chaser guns. And with my mind's eyes I seemed to espy Adam firing from his loopholes to sweep the decks forward, the while Godby and his few gunners served the great basilisks aft, aiming them at a great black ship that stood hard in their wake, yawing now and then to bring her fore-chasers to bear on them in answer.

Suddenly up flamed the sun, turning sea and sky to glory; but I crouched miserable in my helplessness for now I saw that the *Faithfull Friend* steered a course that was

taking her rapidly away from me upon the freshening wind. Perceiving which bitter truth, beholding myself thus befooled, bubbled and tricked (and my head throbbing from the blow of Penfeather's pistol-butt), a mighty anger against him surged within me, and shaking my fists I fell to fierce curses and revilings, like any madman, until what with my aching head and lack of breath I cast myself face down and lay there spent with my futile ravings. Yet, even so, bethinking me of all my fine schemes and purposes thus brought to nothingness, and myself drifting impotent at the mercy of wind and wave, I sought to spit my puny anger against the God that made me in blasphemies and bitter imprecations.

"Oh, shame, shame on you, Martin Conisby! The God you rail upon is my God also. Have done, I say! Be silent, nor tempt His mercy with your childish clamours!"

Up-starting I turned and beheld the Lady Brandon upon her knees within a yard of me, saw her shrink before my gaze and the gripping passion of my hands. For now, reading in her look all her scorn and loathing for the thing I was, I must needs turn my fury upon her and did that the which shames me to this day, for even as she fronted me all defenceless, but with head erect and eyes unflinching despite the sick pallor of her cheeks, I seized her in cruel hold and, dragging her to me, bent her backward across a thwart.

"Ha!" I gasped. "Will ye dare cry shame on me? Will ye mock — will ye flout — will ye scorn me still — and you but a lying, thieving Brandon! Would you trample me 'neath your proud feet — "

"All this!" said she, staring up into my eyes. "But I do pity you most for — what you are become. Oh — kill me if you will; 't would be very easy for you and, mayhap, best for me, and I do not fear to die. So do as you will, Martin Conisby; I do not fear you since Death is my kind friend and shall free me of the shame of you if need be!"

Hereupon I loosed her and, crouched again in the stern

sheets, bowed my head upon my fists whiles she, kneeling patiently beside the midship thwart, ordered her wrenched garments with shaking hands.

And, after some while, her voice with its sweet, vital ring pierced to those black deeps where lay the soul of me.

"'T is growing very rough. What must we do?"

Lifting my head, I saw that the sea was risen considerably, and the boat drifting broadside to the wind so that the waves, taking us abeam, spilled aboard us ever and anon. So I arose and made shift to step the mast and hoist sail, nothing heeding her proffered aid; then shipping the tiller, I put our little vessel before the wind. And now, from a log pitching and rolling at mercy of the waves, this boat became, as it were, alive and purposeful, lifting to the seas with joyous motion, shaking the water from her bows in flashing brine that sparkled jewel-like in the early sun, her every timber thrilling to the buffets of the waters that rushed bubbling astern, all rainbow-hued and with a sound like elfin laughter, until what with all this and the strong, sweet air, even I felt the joy of it; but, though my black humour lifted somewhat, my shame was sore upon me wherefore I kept my gaze for the peak of the sail, the cloudless heaven, the deep blue of the seas and never so much as glanced at the patient, solitary figure amidships.

"Whither do we sail?" she questioned at last.

"What matter?" answered I sullenly.

"Aye, true!" she sighed.

"Besides, I have no compass."

"There is one in the locker here, and with it a packet and a letter writ to you. Shall I bring them?"

"As you will," said I, keeping my gaze averted. So she made her way over to me (and mighty dexterous) despite the motion of the boat and, setting the compass beside me, gave me the letter. It was sealed, and subscribed thus:

"To my well-loved, trusty friend, comrade and brother-adventurer Martin, these:"

Breaking the seal, I read as follows:

For your sore head, Martin, I grieve, but the blow I regret no whit, seeing it was struck to our mutual advantage hereafter. Now you (reading this) being at sea betwixt the parallels 70 and 65 in an open boat and all by reason of circumstances proving too strong for you, Martin, it much behoveth you to mark and heed well these my directions, to wit: You shall lay your course southwesterly and that for these several and sufficing reasons, viz: (1) You lie out of the track of ships. (2) These be treacherous seas, given to sudden furies of wind and raging tempest. (3) I like not the look of the weather. (4) Our Island lieth scarce twenty-four hours' sail due southwesterly. Whereof I have drawn for your guidance a chart of these waters together with a plan of Our Island (very just and exact). Also a chart of the passage or channel through the barrier-reef, for saving this passage there is no landing upon the island that I know of. Nor shall you attempt this passage except at the flood and the seas calm. Being landed, Martin, you shall, with due regard to rest and refreshment, forthwith secure our Treasure (the secret whereof I have included with this my letter). Thereupon and with all despatch, you shall, troubling not for the gold nor silver, take but the four caskets of jewels, and, setting them aboard your boat, sail away due west (three days) until you shall fetch up with another island, the which you shall know by its three several hills plain to be seen and called Gibbet Island, since 't was there I hanged one Juan Maldonada (and richly deserved it!). Here then you shall bury our Treasure (four caskets) in such place as seemeth to you proper and there await my coming. And if I join you not within two months, then shall this mighty treasure three quarters thereof be yours. And if I come not within six months, then shall this fortune be wholly yours, since I shall be beyond all need of it. So now, Martin, good Fortune attend you. Your boat (chosen by me long since and for this very purpose) is staunch and an excellent sea-boat and very well stored with everything for your needs, as arms, clothes, food and the like. Moreover, within the treasure cave is all manner of stores so that a man, even though he bide on the island to his life's end, need suffer no lack but have his every comfort supplied.

And now, as to your head, Martin, 't will be none the worse by this, I judge. And for the blow, 't was no harder than called for and very well intentioned as you shall confess one day, mayhap, unless you be greater fool and blinder than I take you for. Howbeit I trust you, Martin, and in bidding you farewell for the nonce, subscribe myself,

Your faithful friend and comrade to serve,

ADAM PENFEATHER.

Having read this wordy missive, I crumpled it in angry fist and thrust it into my pocket. But now she gave me the packet named therein, the which I forthwith tossed overboard (like the wilful fool I was), thereby involving us in divers and many great dangers and difficulties, as you shall learn hereafter.

Howbeit (the wind serving), I altered our course and stood away southwesterly, even as Adam had directed, since I perceived the weather thickening behind us and the sea heaving with uneasy motion. And presently my companion questioned me again:

"Whither do we sail?"

"Southwesterly."

"Aye, but whither?"

"To an island."

"Is it far?"

"Two days' journey or thereabouts."

"Do you know this island?"

"I have never seen it."

"Then why sail thither?"

"'T is thereabouts Penfeather would meet with us again, if he may."

"And being there, what then?"

"God knoweth!"

Here was silence again save for the creak of mast and timbers as we rose to the gentle swell and the ripple of water 'neath our keel while the sun, high risen, blazed down from the blue, his fierce beams tempered by the cool, sweet wind.

"Are you hungry, Martin?"

"Is there aught to eat?"

"Plenty!" So saying, she opened one of the lockers and brought thence a loaf of fine white bread, a neat's tongue, a flask of wine and a small barrico of water, upon which I, for one, made an excellent meal. Which done, she set all things away again, very orderly and sat elbow on knee, staring away into the distance and with her back to me. Hereupon, I opened the stern locker and found therein a couple of musquetoons, a brace of pistols, a sword with belt and hangers and divers kegs of powder and ball.

"How came you lying stunned in the boat?" asked my companion at last, but without turning her head.

"By roguery!" I answered. "But how and when did the mutiny start?"

"'T was when we went to fetch the boy, my little page, Marjorie and I. He lay hurt and crying on the deck; so we ran out to him and took him up betwixt us, and then I heard shouts and rush of feet, and they were all about us — drunken men singing and dancing. And they struggled with us till came Master Penfeather, with Godby and others, and after much bitter fighting brought us away. But Marjorie, my dear, faithful Marjorie, had taken a blow aimed at me and died — in my arms — And the great cabin choking with powder smoke — and wounded men who cried and shouted. My dear, brave Marjorie! With the dark the fight began again and twice I feared they would break in upon us. Then Master Adam brought me out into the stern gallery and lowered me into the boat where I might lie secure, and so got him back into the battle. But in a little I saw a hand in the gloom cutting at the tow-rope and I screamed, but none heard. And so the boat drifted away and with the dawn I found you lying under a boat cloak."

When she had done, I sat a while staring up at the peak of the sail.

"My Lady Brandon," said I at length, "Fate hath set you in scurvy company, for I am an ill rogue, very rough

and rude-mannered and no fit company for any woman, as you do very well know. Howbeit, I swear that henceforth, so long as we company together, I will trouble you no more than I may either by act or speech, you to your place in the bows yonder and mine here at the tiller; you to your thoughts, I to mine. And thus methinks we shall do well enough until we can go our several ways."

"Must we not speak?" she questioned, keeping her face turned from me.

"When needful, madam!"

"Am I but to answer when you deign me notice? Will it plague you if I sing? Am I to sit with my hands folded henceforth and do nought but think? Must I stay in the bows until you summon me thence?" asked she, and all in the same small, soft voice, so that I perceived my fine speech had been thrown away; wherefore I stared up at the sail and with never a word in answer.

But presently, chancing to look at her, I found her regarding me with her dimpled chin set mighty resolute. "Because," said she, meeting my look, "I shall talk when I will and sing when so minded, Martin Conisby. I shall not sit in the bows, for 't is wet there; and I shall not fold my hands, but you shall teach me how to steer and handle the boat and do my share of the labour. For look now, here are we, by no will of our own, God knoweth, companions in misfortune; let us then aid each other that our troubles be the easier. And oh, pray do you forget Martin Conisby his woes awhile." And away she went and getting to her knees before one of the lockers began rearranging the contents, singing away the while, merry as any grig.

As the day wore on, the skies clouded over with a wind very sudden and blusterous, wherefore, misliking the look of things, I was for shortening sail but feared to leave the helm lest the boat should broach to and swamp while this was a-doing. But the wind increasing, I was necessitated to call my companion beside me and teach her how she must counter each wind-gust with the helm, and found her very apt and quick to learn. So leaving the boat to

her manage, I got me forward and (with no little to do) double-reefed our sail, leaving just sufficient to steer by; which done I glanced to my companion where she leaned to the tiller, her long hair streaming out upon the wind, her lithe body a-sway to the pitching of the boat and steering as well as I myself. From her I gazed to windward, where an ominous and ever-growing blackness filled me with no small apprehensions; wherefore I made fast all our loose gear, as oars, spare sail, spars and the like. Now in the bows were stowed her belongings, a leathern trunk and divers bundles, the which I proceeded to secure in their turn. This done, I got me aft again, but when I would have relieved her of the tiller, she shook her head.

"Nay, let me steer awhile," she cried, looking up through her wind-tossed hair, "'t is joy to me! Lay you down and rest awhile and trust the boat to me." And seeing how quick she was to meet each send of the seas (that were already running high) glad enough was I to humour her whim and clambered forward again. And there (having nought better to do) I set about rigging a rough awning athwart the bows with canvas and a stout spar which methought should keep out the spray and any chance sea that might break forward; though indeed the boat seemed mighty staunch and seaworthy to a miracle.

With every hour the wind waxed in fury, and therewith the sea rose,—huge, rolling billows that came roaring up astern to whirl us aloft amid hissing brine and, passing, left us deep-plunged in great, foamy hollows. Being got back aft at last and with no small exertion (by reason of the boat's pitching) I stared amazed to hear my companion singing right joyously.

"Oh, Martin!" she cried, her voice a-thrill with the clear vital ring I knew so well. "Oh, Martin, the wonder and glory of it! See yonder on these mighty waters, Death rides crying to us. But God is there also, and if these rushing surges 'whelm us we, dying, shall find God there." And beholding her as she sat, her face uplifted to the tempest, her sea-wet hair upborne upon the wind,

I marvelled within myself. "And the boat, Martin!" cried she as we rose on a hissing wave-crest. "This dear, brave boat! See how nobly she rides; indeed and indeed I do love her every timber!"

And verily, to me, awed by these mighty waters, it was wonderful to see how our little craft rose to the seas, buoyant as any cork; now poised 'mid hissing foam high in air, now plunging dizzily down; and ever the wind gathered fury until the very air seemed full of whirling spindrift.

In a while I took the tiller and wondered to see my companion droop all at once with head bowed upon her hands.

"Are you sick?" I cried.

"'T is but weariness," she answered. "I slept no wink last night."

"Why, then go forward and lie down!" said I. The which she did forthwith and made less business of it than I. Reaching the mast she paused thereby to behold my handiwork then, going on her knees, crept beneath the awning and vanished from my view.

Left alone I stared around me on the raging tumult and, beholding all its terrors, my mind was full of wonder of this maid who could sing so blithely with Death all about her and behold God, as it were, riding on the wings of the storm.

Presently she came and sat beside me that we might talk for the wind was very loud.

"It was kind of you to make me so fair a shelter, Martin, and a bed also, kind and very thoughtful, but I shall not sleep to-night unless it be here."

"And why here?"

"Death hath more terrors in the dark, and I grow a little fearful, Martin." So saying, she wrapped a boat cloak about her and, spreading out the other, lay down thereon and so near that I might have touched her where she lay.

And in a while night rushed down upon us and it was dark; but from the dark her voice reached me, where she lay, her head pillowed at my feet, and I, crouching above

her, strove to shelter her somewhat from the lashing spray and buffeting wind. Thus in despite of raging tempest, we contrived to make each other hear, though with difficulty, talking on this wise:

She. Are you afraid?

Myself. No.

She. Have you then no fears of death?

Myself. I have prayed for it, ere now.

She. And vainly! For God, instead, hath made you very hale and strong.

Myself. Aye, for a purpose.

She. What purpose?

Here, seeing I held my peace, she questioned me again:

"Was your purpose the slaying of my father? He is an old man and feeble!"

Myself. He plotted the downfall of our house and slew my father!

She. And so you have prayed for vengeance?

Myself. I have.

She. And God hath denied you this also. Should you die to-night you go to him innocent of your enemy's blood.

Myself. Aye, but if I live — ?

She. You shall grow wiser, mayhap, and forgetting the ill that lies behind you, reach out to the good that lieth before.

Myself. And what of my just vengeance?

She. Vengeance is but for the weak of soul; 't is only the strong can forgive.

Myself. What of my sacred vow? What of my many prayers for vengeance?

She. Empty breath!

Myself. Dare you say so?

She. I dare more, for lying here with Death all about us, I tell you, Martin Conisby, despite your size and strength, you are no better than a pitiful, peevish child —

"Ha!" cried I fiercely, bending over her in the dimness until I might stare into her eyes, wide and dark in the pale oval of her face. "Will ye dare — "

"A child," said she again, nodding at me. "Lost and wilful and very selfish, with no thought above Martin Conisby and his wrongs. Nay, scowl not nor grind your teeth; 't is vain! For how may I, that fear not God's dreadful tempest, stoop to fear poor Martin Conisby?"

"Stoop, madam!" I cried hoarsely.

"Aye, stoop," said she. "The wrongs you have endured have plunged you to the very deeps, have stripped you of your manhood. And yet — yours is no murderer's face, even when you scowl and clench your fist! 'T was so you looked when you fought that rough boy on my behalf so many years ago when you were Sir Martin the Knight-errant and I was Princess Damaris. And now, Martin, you that were my playmate and had forgot — you that were so ready to fight on my behalf, in this desolation there is none you may do battle with for my sake saving only — Martin Conisby!"

Now here she turned, her face hid from me 'neath a fold of the great boat cloak and spake no more. And I, crouched above her, staring down at her muffled form outstretched thus at my mercy, felt my quivering fist relax, felt my brutish anger cower before her trust and fearlessness. And so, leaning across the tiller, I stared away into the raging dark; and now it seemed that the soul of me had sunk to deeps more black and, groping blindly there, hungered for the light.

So all night long we drove before the tempest through a pitchy gloom full of the hiss of mighty seas that roared past us in the dark like raging giants. And all night long she lay, her head pillowed at my feet, sleeping like a wearied child and her long, wind-tossed hair within touch of my hand.

CHAPTER XX

Perils and Dangers at Sea

Towards dawn the wind abated more and more and, glancing into the lightening east, I saw the black storm-clouds pierced, as it were, by a sword of glory, a single vivid ray that smote across the angry waters, waxing ever more glorious until up flamed the sun, before whose joyous beams the sullen clouds scattered, little by little, and melted away.

And now I (that was doomed to my own undoing), instead of thanking that merciful God who had delivered us from such dire peril, must needs scowl upon this kindly sun and fall again to my black humours. For, the immediate dangers past, I began to ponder the future and inwardly to rage against that perverse fate the which was driving me whither it would. So, crouched chin on fist, scowling across these tempestuous waters (for though the wind was fallen the seas ran very high), within myself I cursed Adam Penfeather and all his works.

"You are hungry, Martin!" Turning about, I beheld my companion sitting up, regarding me with eyes that belied her solemn mouth.

"How should you know this?"

"You frown, Martin! Though the storm is done and we alive, yet you frown! Have patience, and you shall eat and sleep."

"I want neither one nor other!" I began.

"And you are wet, Martin!"

"'T is no matter!"

"And cold!"

"The sun shall warm me."

"So you shall eat, and lie here i' the sunshine, and sleep!"

And away she went to vanish under the dripping penthouse forward (the which had served its purpose admirably well) whiles I, perceiving the waves subsiding and the wind blowing steady and fair, laid our course due southwesterly again and, lashing the helm, went forward to shake out the reefs, finding it no easy task, what with the stiffness of my cramped limbs and the pitching of the boat; howbeit, 'twas done at last but, coming back, I tripped across a thwart and fell, cursing.

"Are you much hurt?" she questioned, stooping over me; whereupon (for very shame) I turned my back, answering short and ungraciously and sat frowning like the sullen rogue I was whiles she busily set forth the wherewithal to break our fast, singing softly to herself.

"I told you I was an ill rogue and rough!" said I bitterly.

"Why, so you did," said she, meeting my scowl with her wide, calm gaze. "Also you are hungry, and the food is unspoiled despite the storm — come and eat!"

So I ate (though with mighty ill grace) and found little savour in the food, for all my hunger; but she waited on my wants with heedful care, my surliness notwithstanding.

"Whose was the hand set this boat adrift, think you?" said I suddenly.

"Nay, 'twas too dark to see!"

"'T was Penfeather!" said I, clenching my fist. "Aye, it was Adam, I'll stake my life on't!"

"Then poor Master Adam!" she sighed.

"How? Will you pity a rogue?"

"I speak of Master Penfeather," said she. "If he indeed cut the boat adrift it was doubtless because the battle was going against him, and he did this to save me!" Hereupon I laughed and she, flushing angrily, turned her back on me.

"Pray you," she questioned, "when may we hope to reach the island and be free of each other?"

"To-night or to-morrow, unless the storm hath driven us further than I judge." And now, our meal done, she set away everything in its appointed place and thereafter sat watching the sea, all foam and sparkle beneath the young sun. And presently a sigh brake from her and she turned, her anger forgotten quite.

"Oh!" cried she, "'t is joy to be alive, to breathe such air and behold such a glory of sea and sky! Look around us, Martin, and give thanks!" And truly the sea was smooth enough, save for a long, rolling swell out of the east and with a soft and gentle wind to abate the sun's generous heat. "Are you not glad to be alive, Martin?" said she.

"To what end?" I answered. "Of what avail is life to me, cast away on a desolate island?"

"Desolate?" said she, starting. "Do you mean we shall be alone?"

"Aye, I do."

"But surely," said she with troubled look, "surely Master Adam will fetch us away?"

"There is a chance!"

"And — if not?"

"God knoweth!" said I gloomily. "'T is a small island as I learn, little known and out of the track of vessels."

"Yet a ship may come thither to our relief?"

"How if one doth not?"

"Then must we tempt the sea again in our boat."

"I am no navigator, and these seas are strange to me."

"Howbeit," said she bravely, "we have good store of provisions."

"And when they are gone — how then, think you?"

"I think you do lack for sleep. Go, take your rest; may-hap you shall waken a little bolder and less despairing."

"And you," said I, "you that so look on all this as a joyous adventure —"

"Joyous? Ah, God!" she cried. "Do you think be-

cause I do not weep that my heart is not full of misery and grief to lose thus home and friends and country and live 'prisoned and solitary with such as you, that think but on your own selfish woes and in your big body bear the soul of a fretful babe? I hate you, Martin Conisby, scorn and despise you! And now give me the tiller and begone to your sleep!"

Saying which, she pointed where she had spread the cloaks hard by the midship thwart, and I, amazed by her fierce outburst, suffered her to take the tiller from my hold, and coming amidships laid myself down even as she had commanded.

But no thought of sleep had I, rather I lay that I might watch her (furtively, beneath my arm) where she sat, head aloft, cheeks flushed and bosom tempestuous. And (despite her beauty) a very termagant shrew I thought her. Then, all at once, I saw a tear fall and another; and she that had sung undaunted to the tempest and outfaced its fury sat bitterly weeping like any heart-broke maid, yet giving due heed to our course, none the less. Presently, chancing to look my way, she caught me watching her and knitted her slender brows at me:

"Get you to sleep!" said she. "Oh, get you to sleep nor trouble my grief!"

Hereupon (and feeling mighty guilty) I pillowed my head and, closing my eyes, presently fell to sweet and dreamless slumber.

"Martin, Martin — look!"

I started up and, rubbing sleep from my eyes, turned to gaze whither she pointed; and there, faint and far, above the rolling blue of the seas, rose a blue shape.

"'T is the island, Martin! Our voyaging is nigh ended."

"Aye, 't is the island!" said I.

"'T is like an island of dream, Martin."

"Nay, 't is real enough," quoth I, "and solitary!"

"There is a perspective glass in the locker yonder, Martin."

"Master Adam was vastly thoughtful!" quoth I bitterly. And reaching the glass I gave it to her.

"Will you not look at the island?" she questioned wonderingly.

"Nay, I shall see more than enough of it ere long! Do you give me the tiller and view it as you will."

"I see rocks!" said she, after some while.

"Ha, a barren place, as I thought—"

"Nay, there are trees—many trees! Oh, 't is wonderful!" And so she sat viewing it all untiring, every moment discovering some new marvel; but I fell to my old black humour, since to me this island was no better than a prison.

By midday we were come so close that I might see the place very well; a smallish island with sheer cliffs very jagged and grim where the seas broke in foam and crowned with many and divers trees, beyond which rose greeny slopes with more trees that mounted up and up to a lofty summit of rocks and brush. Being within some two miles of these forbidding cliffs, I steered to fetch a compass about the island and so presently opened a bay of white sand with tree-clad cliffs beyond and before it a sheet of placid water or lagoon shut off from the sea by a semi-circular barrier-reef such as Adam had described.

And now, thinking me that (by his account) this was the only means of landing upon the island, I stood for this reef, against which the foaming seas dashed with a mighty roaring, looking for that narrow channel through the reef, that opening amid these breakers, whereby we might steer into those calm waters beyond.

And presently, sure enough, I espied it well-nigh in the middle of the reef, even as Adam had said, and, putting up the helm, ran for it straightway. An evil enough place it looked, perilously narrow and with mighty seas that broke in thunderous spray to right and left of it; insomuch that heedful of Adam's warning (and all too late) I was minded to bear up and stand away, plying off and on, until the waves should have moderated. But in

my folly I had sailed too near and now, swept onward by some current, the boat, responding no more to her helm, was borne on at ever-increasing speed. So thus helpless and at mercy of the seas we drove straight for this perilous channel until I had some desperate hope that she might make it; on we sped, nearer and nearer, until the spume of the breakers was all about us and I well-nigh deafened by their roar; but this roar was pierced suddenly by a cry:

"Oh, Martin! God pity us—look!" Turning my head, I saw a hugeous wave hard upon us, felt my companion's arms about me and then—deafened, blinded, choking—I was whirled aloft on this mighty sea, tossed, buffeted, hurled into blinding sunlight, buried beneath green deeps and, expectant of death, suddenly found myself face down on warm sands, wherein my griping fingers clutched desperately against the back-rush of the sea.

So lay I gasping and gripping this kindly earth and waited to do battle for what remained of life, hearkening for the fierce hiss of that great wave that was to bear me back to the horror of those green deeps the which should bury me for ever; instead I heard the gentle, drowsy lapping of water all about me and, opening my eyes, beheld myself lying on the edge of those white sands that bordered the lagoon, while behind me the seas thundered impotent against the reef. And now, little by little, I saw that the great wave must have borne me hither in miraculous fashion; and lying thus bruised and spent, I must needs remember how Adam had experienced the like.

But all at once I staggered up to my feet and began staring hither and thither; then, as my brain cleared and strength came back, I took to running along the edge of the lagoon like one demented, staring down into these placid waters and searching the white sands with eyes of dreadful expectancy, yet nowhere could I discover sign or trace of my companion. None the less I continued to run aimlessly back and forth, heedless of my going, slipping and stumbling and often falling, but never staying

my search until the sweat poured from me. And ever as I ran I kept repeating these words to myself over and over again, viz: "Adam's comrade Nicholas Frant was cast safe ashore with him!"

Thus I ran to and fro, gasping these words to myself, until, tripping over a piece of driftwood, I lay bruised and well-nigh spent. Howbeit, I forced myself up again and recommenced my search and this time with more method, for I swore to myself that I would find her or perish also. To this end I determined to get me out upon the reef; now to come thither I must needs climb over certain rocks; so came I thither and, breathless with haste, made shift to mount these rocks, heedless of bruises or bleeding hands and, reaching the summit at last, paused all at once.

She lay face down almost below these rocks, outstretched within a little cove, and her long, wet hair wide-tossed like drifted seaweed all about her. Now seeing how still she lay, a great sickness seized me so that I sank weakly to my knees and crouched thus a while, with no strength nor will to move. At last, and very slowly, I made my way a-down the rocks and, being within the little cove, found myself all trembling and holding my breath. Then, though the soft sand deadened all sound of my going, I crept forward. So came I where she lay, her wet draperies clinging fast about her; and standing above this stilly form I looked down upon her slender shapeliness, yet feared to touch her. And now I saw that one sleeve was torn away and upon her round white arm the marks my cruel hands had wrought.

"Damaris!" said I, falling on my knees beside her, and the word was a groan. And in that moment she raised her head and looked at me, and in her eyes methought to read wonder and a sudden, great joy.

"Martin!" she whispered. "Oh, thank God!" And so hid her face again. Now, being yet on my knees, I looked from her to the blue heaven and round about me, like one that wakes upon a new world.

CHAPTER XXI

How I Was Haunted of Black Bartlemy

"Are you hurt?" said I at last.

"Indeed," she answered, "all over. Yet am I alive and there's the wonder. The wave cast me into the lagoon, and I crept ashore here. Then methought you surely dead and I alone within these solitudes, and so I swooned, Martin."

"Being afraid of the loneliness?"

"Yes, Martin."

"Even fellow as rough as I is better than loneliness?"

"Yes, Martin."

"Though your arms be bruised by my handling! For this I — I would crave your pardon — "

"'T is all forgot!" said she, making shift to cover up her arm.

"But your hand is bleeding — "

"A scratch!"

"Have you no other hurts?"

"A bruise or so. And did you come a-seeking me, Martin?"

"Yes."

"Are you glad to find me alive?"

"Yes."

"Even a Brandon is better than nobody, Martin?" But at this I arose, albeit stiffly, and turned away. "Whither would you go?" she questioned.

"To seek some shelter ere night catch us."

"Shall I not come with you?"

"Can you walk?"

Hereupon she made to rise but, getting to her knees, flinched and bit her lip.

"I 'm so bruised, Martin!" said she.

"Why, then, bide you here; yonder cleft i' the rock should serve for to-night. Howbeit, I 'll go look." So I limped across the beach to where showed a great fissure in the cliff hard beside a lofty tree; being come within this cleft I found it narrow suddenly and at the end a small cave very dry and excellent suited to our purpose. Moreover, close at hand was a little rill that bubbled among mossy rocks, mighty pleasant to be heard. And hereabouts grew all manner of vines, sweet-smelling shrubs and fern; of these I gathered goodly quantity and, strowing them within the cave, therewith made a very passable bed; which done, I went back where she lay a-drying her wet garments in the warm sun as well as she might.

"Martin," said she, mighty doleful, "I have lost my comb and all my hairpins."

"I will fashion you others."

"Aye, but the boat, Martin, our dear, brave boat!"

"To-morrow I will seek what remains of her."

"And our stores — all lost, Martin!"

"I can find more."

"Where?"

"Among the rocks and on the trees. There should be no lack of fruit and fish, according to Adam."

"Nay but," sighed she, shaking woeful head, "even though we contrive to live thus, yet here must we 'bide far from our kind with small hopes of relief and destitute of all things to our comfort."

"Why, look now," said I, "here in my pocket is a tinder box the which is a very comfortable thing; here in my belt a good, stout knife which is another comfortable thing; and yonder is a cave, dry and airy, shall make you a goodly chamber; so take comfort to-night, at least." And drawing my knife, I betook me to whetting the blade on the sole of my damp shoe. Glancing up at last, I found my companion regarding me with strange expression.

"Methinks you are greatly changed!" said she.

"How changed?"

"In the boat you did nought but cry out and rail 'gainst fortune, but now, Martin—"

"Now," said I, "the sun is low, and night cometh apace in these latitudes; let me know you sheltered ere it be dark!" and sheathing my knife I rose. Then, seeing what effort she made to come to her knees, I reached her my hand, aiding her up to her feet. So she took a step and, stifling a cry of pain, would have fallen but for my arm.

"Oh, Martin," said she, with rueful shake of the head, "I fear I cannot walk."

"Lean on me—"

"'T is vain," said she, catching her breath, "I cannot set this foot to ground."

"Have you any bones broke?"

"Nay, 't is none so bad as that—"

"Where's your hurt?"

"My knee—my ankle! And I'm direly bruised, Martin."

"But you cannot sleep out here!"

"I needs must. The sand is warm and soft to my bed."

"There is a better waiting you in the cave yonder."

"But—if I cannot walk, Martin—"

"Why, then, said I, "why, then, you must suffer that I carry you."

"I fear I am—greatly heavy, Martin!"

"As to that—" said I and, lifting her as gently as I might, began to bear her across the beach. And after we had gone thus some way she spoke:

"I fear me I am vastly heavy!"

"No!" says I, keeping my gaze before me.

"Yet you go very slowly."

"'T is that I would not jostle you."

"And the sand is ill-going, belike, Martin?"

"Most true!" said I, pretending to stumble.

"Why, then, I pray you take your time." At this I

ventured to glance down at her but saw no more than the curve of a cheek and the tip of a little ear; and staring at this came very near blundering into a rock. So I bore her into the rocky cleft already full of shadow, taking due heed in my going, yet mighty conscious of all the yielding softness of her, none the less.

"Your clothes are very damp!" said I.

"They will be dry ere morning," she answered, her voice muffled.

"I had best light a fire then!"

"There is no need; 't is very warm, I do think."

"'T is good against wild beasts and the like," said I.

"Why, then, as you will, Martin."

Reaching the little cave at last she would have had me set her down; but I bade her lie still and, getting to my knees within the cave, I laid her upon her ferny bed, whereat she uttered a little cry of pleasure.

"Why, Martin," said she, snuggling down, "here is a wondrous soft bed and fragrant."

"'T will serve until I can contrive a better," quoth I and, coming without the cave, stood looking down on her, while the night deepened about us apace.

"And what of you, Martin?"

"I shall sleep here, beyond the fire."

"Do you think there be any wild beasts hereabouts?"

"God knoweth!" said I. "Howbeit you may sleep secure and fear nothing."

"I know that, oh, I know that!" answered she gently.

"Do you lack for aught?"

"Only sleep, Martin."

"Why, then, I 'll set about making our fire." So I fell to gathering twigs and driftwood, of which there was no lack, and taking out my tinder box (albeit the tinder was still damp) soon contrived to have the fire crackling right merrily. This done and with store of fuel to hand, I scooped me out a hollow in the warm sand and lying therein found myself very well, the aches of my many bruises notwithstanding. The night air struck chill

through my damp garments but now, stretched in the comfort of the fire, there grew within me a great wonder at our miraculous deliverance; and this led me to ponder upon our present situation, cast thus destitute upon this lonely island where, devoid of every comfort and necessity, we must needs live in barbarous fashion as best we might until either Penfeather should come to our relief or we be taken off by some chance vessel. And supposing (thought I) that neither chance befall and we doomed to drag out our days to their miserable end? Here I must needs bethink me of all the woeful tales I had heard of marooners or poor, shipwrecked mariners who by reason of wretchedness and hardship had run mad or become baser than the brutes. And now I must needs take out and read Penfeather's crumpled letter and bethinking me how (in my wicked folly) I had cast overboard the packet of instructions whereby we might at least have found all those stores he made mention of, from cursing him I straightway fell to bitter recriminations of my vain self.

"Are you asleep, Martin?"

"No!" Here I heard her sigh, and a rustle as she turned on her leafy couch.

"Oh, Martin, surely God hath had us in His care to bring us safe through so many dangers, and methinks His gentle hand will be over us still."

"Have you no fear of what is to be?"

"None, Martin — not now. But had I found myself alone here — hurt and helpless in the dark — and really alone, oh, methinks I should have died indeed, or lost my wits and perished so. Oh, truly, truly, God is infinitely merciful!"

Thus (and all unknowing) she rebuked my ungrateful despondency. For (thought I) if she, a woman accustomed to ease and comfort, may thus front our desperate fortunes undismayed and with faith unshaken, how much more should I, a man inured to suffering and hardened by privation? Thus, checking my gloomy foreboding, I too breathed a prayer to God for His infinite mercies and

thereafter fell to pondering how I might supply our more pressing needs with such small means as I possessed; and so, in a while, dozed off to sleep.

I started up, knife in hand, to find the moon very big and bright, flooding the world with a radiance wondrous to behold; and blinking drowsily, I wondered what had waked me. Now as I gazed about me, the place seemed all at once to take on an evil look, what with its steepy sides a-bristle with tangled vines and bushes and pierced here and there with black holes and fissures, and I shivered. The fire being low, I, minded to replenish it, was groping for my fuel when I started and remained peering up at the cliff above, with ears on the stretch and every nerve a-tingle.

The night was very calm and still, for the wind had died away, and save for the distant murmur of the surf beyond the reef, nought was to hear; then and all at once, from one of those black holes in the rock above, I heard a long-drawn, sighing breath and therewith a faint scuffling. Slowly and cautiously I got to my feet and, with knife gripped ready, began to creep thither; and now within one of these gloomy crevices in the rock-face I saw a crouching shape that, as I drew nearer, sprang away with a snort and a clatter, and I saw this was a large goat.

And surely no poor wight was ever more relieved than I as, sheathing my knife, I wiped the sweat from me; and now to relief was added a mighty satisfaction, for where was one goat would be others. Thus, my fears allayed and bethinking me how savoury was a mess of goat's flesh, I fell a-watering at the mouth like the hungry animal I was.

Having no more mind to sleep (and the moon so marvellous bright) I wandered forth of these shadowy rocks and, being upon the sands, stood to look about me. Before me stretched the wide ocean, a desolation of heaving waters that, rolling shorewards, broke in splendour 'neath the moon; to my right lay a curve of silver beach backed

by cliffs and groves of stately palms; and to my left and hard beside these bush-girt rocks was a great and lofty tree.

Now observing this tree more closely, its mighty writhen branches and gnarled roots, and how it stood close against the opening in the cliff, an uneasy feeling possessed me that this tree and its immediate surroundings were all familiar, almost as I had seen it before though I knew this could not be. So stood I chin in hand, staring about me, and ever my unease grew; and then:

So that night, Martin, the moon being high and bright, I came to that stretch of silver sand where they lay together rigid and pale and, though I had no tool but his dagger and a piece of driftwood, I contrived to bury them 'neath the great pimento tree that stood beside the rock-cleft, and both in the same grave.

It was for all the world as though Adam had repeated the words in my ear, insomuch that I glanced round as almost expecting to see him. So then it was here Black Bartlemy had died at the hands of the poor, tortured Spanish lady; and here they lay buried, their bones mouldering together within a yard of me. And standing in this dismal spot I must needs mind Adam's narrative, and great was my pity for this poor Spanish lady.

In a while I got me back to the fire and, lying down, fain would have slept, but my mind was full of Adam's story. Howbeit, after some while, what with fatigue and the warmth of the fire, slumber took me.

But in my sleep the dead arose and stood fronting each other beneath a pallid moon, Bartlemy in all the bravery of velvet and lace and flowing periwig, and the Spanish lady tall and proud and deadly pale. And now as she shrank from his evil touch, I saw that her face was the face of Joan Brandon.

Sweating in dumb anguish I watched Bartlemy grip her in cruel hands and bend her backward across his knee while she stared up at him with eyes of horror, her lips

moving in passionate entreaty. But, as he bent over her, was a flash of steel, and deep-smitten he staggered back to the great tree and, leaning there, fell into a fit of wild laughter so that the silver dagger hilt that was shaped like a woman seemed to dance and leap upon his quick-heaving breast; then as he swayed there, laughing his life out, he raised his face to the pale moon, and I saw that the face of Black Bartlemy was my own.

CHAPTER XXII

Divers Adventures Upon the Island

Waking to a glory of sun, I found my companion looking down on me all anxious-eyed where she knelt, her hand upon my shoulder.

"Why, Joan," said I drowsily, "my lady—"

"You were groaning, Martin, so I came to you."

"Groaning?" said I, flinching from her touch, "'t was nought! An ill fancy—a dream, no more. But here is the sun well up and I a-snoring—"

"Nay, you groaned and cried out, Martin. And 't is yet full early."

"And you 'll be mighty hungry and for that matter so am I!" So saying I rose and, without more ado, strode away across the sands towards the reef. Now as I went, I chanced upon a great turtle shell (to my joy!) and divers others marvellously shaped and tinted and chose such as might serve us for cups and the like. With these beneath my arm I clambered out upon the reef and (the tide being out) saw many rocks amongst which I had soon collected good store of shellfish, as limpets, oysters and others much like a periwinkle, though larger. Filling my turtle shell with these, I took it 'neath my arm again and went on, following the curve of the reef, clambering over these slimy rocks, and found it no small labour, what with my burden and the heat of the sun; but I persevered, seeking some fragment of our boat or the stores wherewith she had been so well laden. Yet, and search how I might, found nought to reward me. Having thus traversed the whole reef and explored the rocks beyond very thoroughly, I cast me down beside the lagoon

to bathe my hands and face and rest myself awhile. Presently, chancing to turn my head, I saw a place of trees hard by, and started up, my weariness clean forgotten. For divers of these trees bore great clusters of yellowish fruit, the which I knew for a sort of plantain, very wholesome and of delicate savour. So, casting out my limpets and periwinkles, I hasted to pluck good store of this fruit and, with my turtle shell thus well laden, hastened back to our refuge very well content.

My companion being absent, I seated myself in the shade and began opening the oysters with my knife as well as I might; in the which occupation she presently found me and grew very merry at my clumsy efforts. And now I noticed that she had wrought her long hair into two braids very thick and glossy, also she had somehow contrived to mend the rents in her gown and her torn sleeve.

"Why, you have combed your hair!" said I, wondering and speaking my thought aloud.

"With my fingers; they must be my comb until you can make me a better — alack, my poor hair!"

"Why, then, you must have a comb so soon as I can contrive one. But now see the breakfast Nature hath provided us withal!"

And who so full of pleased wonderment as she, particularly as regarded the fruit, which she pronounced delicious, but my shellfish she showed small liking for, though I found them eatable enough. Seeing her so pleased I told her I hoped to provide better fare very soon and recounted my adventure with the goat.

"But," said she, "how shall you go a-hunting and no firearms?'

"With a bow and arrows."

"Have you found these also?"

"No, I must make them. I shall look out a sapling shaped to my purpose and trim it with my knife. For the cord of my bow I will have leather strips cut from my jerkin."

"Aye, but your arrows, Martin, how shall you barb them without iron?"

"True!" said I, somewhat hipped. But in that moment my eye lighted on a piece of driftwood I had gathered for fuel and, reaching it, I laid it at her feet. "There," said I, pointing to the heads of divers rusty bolts that pierced it, "there is iron enough to arm a score of arrows."

"But how shall you make them, Martin?"

"Heat the iron soft and hammer it into shape."

"But you have neither hammer nor anvil."

"Stones shall do."

"Oh, wonderful!" she cried.

"Nay, it is not done yet!" said I, a little shamefaced.

"And how may I help you?"

"Watch me work."

"Indeed, and I will keep your fire going. So come, let us begin."

Our meal done, I gathered twigs for kindling and a great pile of driftwood, of which was no lack, and with small boulders I builded a fireplace against the cliff where we soon had a fire drawing merrily, wherein I set my precious piece of timber. Having charred it sufficiently, I found it an easy matter to break out the iron bolts and nails; five of them there were, of from four to eight inches in length, and though the ends were much corroded by the sea there yet remained enough sound iron for my purpose. And now, my bolts ready for the fire, I began to look for some stone that might serve me for hammer, and my companion likewise. Suddenly, as I sought and mighty diligent, I heard her cry out to me and, beholding her leaning in the cave mouth, all pale and trembling, came running.

"What is 't?" cried I — struck by the horror of her look.

"Oh, Martin!" she gasped. "Oh, Martin — 't is in there — all huddled — in the darkest corner! And I — I slept with it — beside me all night!" Coming within the

cave, I looked whither her shaking hand pointed and saw what I took at first for a monstrous egg and beyond this the staves of a small barrel; then, bending nearer, I saw these were the skull and ribs of a man. And this man had died very suddenly, for the skeleton lay face down, one bony arm folded under him, the other wide-tossed, and the skull, shattered behind, shewed a small, round hole just above and betwixt the cavernous eye-sockets; about the ribs were the mouldering remains of a leathern jerkin girt by a broad belt wherein was a knife and a rusty sword; but that which pleased me mightily was a thing still fast-clenched in these bony fingers, and this no other than a heavy hatchet. So, disturbing these poor bones as little as need be, I took the hatchet and thereafter sword and knife; and then, turning to go, stopped all at once, for tied about the bony neck by a leathern thong I espied a shrivelled parchment. Wondering, I took this also and, coming without the cave, found my companion leaning as I had left her and very shaky.

"Oh, Martin!" said she, shivering. "And I slept within touch of it!"

"But you slept very well and he, poor soul, is long past harming you or any." So saying, I smoothed out the crackling parchment and, holding it in her view, saw this writ very bold and clear:

Benjamin Galbally
Slain of necessity June 20, 1642
This for a sign to like Rogues.
Adam Penfeather.

"Will this be our Adam Penfeather, Martin?"

"Indeed," answered I, "there is, methinks, but one Adam Penfeather in this world, the which is just as well, mayhap."

"Then he murdered this poor man?"

"Why, the fellow had this hatchet in his fist; it hath lain rusting in his grasp all these years, so methinks his blow came something too late! Though he must be mighty

quick who 'd outmatch Penfeather, I guess. No, this man, I take it, died in fight. Though why Adam must set this placard about the poor rogue's neck is beyond me."

"Let us go away, Martin. This is an evil place."

"It is!" said I, glancing at the great pimento tree that marked the grave of the poor Spanish lady and Black Bartlemy. "Truly we will seek out another habitation and that at once. Howbeit, I have gotten me my hammer." And I showed her the hatchet, the which, unlike the ordinary boarding-axe, was furnished with a flat behind the blade, thus:

Seeing my companion so anxious to be gone, I left my fire to burn out and, giving her my hand, forthwith turned my back on this place of death nor sorry to do it.

Following the base of the cliff, we found an opening in the rock vaulted and arched by nature, so that it was a wonder to behold, and so came to that curving stretch of white sands, bordering the lagoon, the which we there and then agreed to call "Deliverance" in memory of our escape. What with the soft sand and scattered rocks it was ill-going for my companion but, though she limped painfully, she held bravely on nevertheless, being of a mighty resolute mind as this narrative will show.

Now as we went slowly thus, I pointed out caves a-plenty and very proper to our purpose, but she would have none of them and was for ever lifting her eyes to the cliffs and tree-clad greeny slopes beyond.

"Let us seek above," said she, "where there be trees and mayhap flowers, for Martin, I do love trees."

"Nay but," said I, "none save a bird or a goat may climb yonder."

"Let us be patient and seek a way, Martin."

"And you all bruised and lame!"

"Nay, I am very well and — see yonder!" Looking whither she would have me, I saw, beyond this great jutting rock, a green opening in the cliffs with a gentle ascent.

"Oh, Martin!" cried she, stopping suddenly, "'t is like England, 't is like one of our dear Kentish lanes!" And indeed so it was, being narrow and grassy and shady with trees, save that these were such trees as never grew on English soil.

"Let us go, Martin, let us go!"

So we began the ascent and (despite blazing sun), the slope being gradual, found it easier than it had looked. On we went and though she often stumbled she made nought of it nor stayed until we were come to a green level or plateau, whence the ground before us trended downwards to a wondrous fertile little valley where ran a notable stream 'twixt reedy banks; here also bloomed flowers, a blaze of varied colours; and beyond these again were flowery thickets, a very maze of green boskages besplashed with the vivid colour of flower or bird, for here were many such birds that flew hither and thither on gaudy wings and filled the air with chatterings and whistlings strange to be heard.

Now beholding all this, my companion sank to the ground and sat very still and silent, like one rapt in pleasing wonder.

"Oh!" said she at last and very softly. "Surely here is an earthly paradise. Oh, Martin, the beauty of it!"

"Yet these flowers have no smell!" said I. "And for these gaudy birds I would give them all for one honest English robin or sweet-throated blackbird!"

But she, chin in hand, sat a-gazing upon this prospect as she would never tire. As for me, I began to look around and, the more I looked, the better I liked this place, pleasantly shaded as it was by trees and affording from this eminence a wide view of the sea, the lagoon, and Deliverance Beach below. Moreover, I heard near-by the pleasant sound of falling water and, drawn by this, came

to a flowery thicket and, forcing my way through, paused suddenly, as well I might, for before me, set in the face of a rock, was a door. All askew it hung and grown over with a riot of weed and vines; and behind the weather-worn timber I saw the gloom of a cavern.

Approaching this door I found it built with ship's timbers exceeding stout and strong, joined by great battens clamped with bolts and nails, and in the midst a loop-hole; and besides this I saw divers shot-marks in these timbers, the which set me a-wondering. Now having my hatchet in hand, I set about cutting away bush and vines and, forcing wide the door (the which swung 'twixt great beams like jambs, clamped to the rock), I stepped into the cool dimness beyond. The place was irregular of shape but very spacious and lighted by a narrow, weed-choked crevice high up that admitted a soft, greeny glow very pleasing after the glare of the sun; by which light I perceived that from this cave two smaller caves opened. Now seeing this place had once been the abode of some poor castaway, I sought high and low in hopes of finding something to our use, if no more than a broken cup, but came on nothing save the ruin of a small table; the place was bare as my hand. I was yet busied in my fruitless search when came my companion, all pleased-eyed wonderment.

"Why, 't is as good as any cottage!" cried she.

"And better than some," said I, "for here is no thatch to leak and no windows to break and let in the rain!"

"Oh, Martin, for a broom!" said she, looking around upon the floor, ankle-deep in dead leaves, twigs and the like. "Oh, for a broom!"

"These leaves be well enough—"

"But better for a broom, Martin."

"Why, then a broom you shall have," said I and, coming without the cave, I cut twigs sufficient to my purpose and divers lengths of vine, very strong and tough, and therewith bound my twigs about a stick I had trimmed for a handle; whiles she, sitting upon a great stone that lay hard by, watched me with mighty interest.

"You are very clever, Martin!" said she.

"'T is very rough, I doubt."

"I have seen many a worse broom used in England, Martin."

"'T will serve, mayhap."

"'T is excellent!" said she, and taking the broom from me away she limped with it forthwith and I, standing without the cave, presently heard her sweeping away (despite her bruises), and singing sweet as any mounting lark. I now set out to bring away such things as I had left behind, as my iron and the turtle shell (the which I held of more account than all the jewels in Adam's treasure), and on my way stopped to cut a stout, curved branch that I thought might furnish me a powerful bow; and another that, bladed with iron, should become a formidable spear. Though why my mind should run to weapons of offence, seeing that the island, so far as I knew, was deserted and sheltered no wild beasts, I know not. Reaching Deliverance Sands I paused to look about me for such pieces of driftwood as might serve us and came on several full of nails and bolts, some of these timbers being warped with age and others comparatively new. And looking on these poor remains of so many noble ships, and thinking of the numberless poor souls that had manned them and gone to their account, I could not but feel some awe for these storm-rent timbers as I handled them. And presently, as I laboured, I spied a piece new-painted and, dragging it forth from sand and seaweed, knew it for the gunwale of our own boat. This put me in great hopes that I might come upon some of our stores but, though I sought diligently then and for days after, I never found anything but this poor fragment. Having laid by such timbers as showed iron of any sort, I went my way and so at last reached our first shelter. And what should I espy upon a ledge of rock just above me but a goat; for a moment the creature blinked at me, chewing busily, then scrambled to its feet; but in that instant I caught up a heavy stone that chanced handy and hurled it; the poor

beast bleated once and, rolling down the rock, thudded at my feet where I despatched it with my knife. My next care was to skin it, which unlovely task I made worse by my bungling; howbeit, it was done at last and I reeking of blood and sweat. None the less I persevered and, having cleaned the carcass, I cut therefrom such joints as might satisfy our immediate needs and, setting them in my turtle shell with my irons, hung up the carcass within the coolest part of the cave, out of reach of any prowling beast. This done, I went down to the lagoon and laved my arms and hands and face, cleansing myself as well as I might, and so, taking my well-laden turtle shell under one arm and the reeking skin beneath the other, I set off. Now it was midday and the sun very hot, insomuch that the sweat poured from me, and more than once I must needs pause to moisten my hair to keep off the heat. At last, espying a palmetto that grew adjacent, I made shift to get me a leaf, whereof, with twigs to skewer and shape it, I made me the semblance of a hat and so tramped on again. Being come to the plateau I set down my burdens, very thankful for the kindly shade and the sweet, cool wind that stirred up here, and turned to find my companion regarding me pale-cheeked and with eyes wide and horror-struck.

"Why, what now?" said I, taking a step towards her; but seeing how she shrank away I paused and, glancing down at myself, saw my clothes all smirched with the blood of the goat. "How, is it this?" said I. "Well, a little blood is no great matter!" But she still eyeing me mightily askance, I grew angry. "Ha!" quoth I, "you 'll be thinking doubtless of the murders aboard ship and my bloody jerkin? Why, then, madam, think and grow as wise as you may!"

Saying which I strode off; and thus I presently heard the soothing sound of falling water, yet look where I might could see none save that in the little valley below. Being direly athirst I began to seek for this unseen rill, and little by little was led up a steep, bush-grown acclivity

until, all at once, I found myself in a right pleasant place; for here, all set about with soft mosses, ferns and flowers, I beheld a great oval basin or rocky hollow some twelve feet across and brimfull of pellucid water through which I might see the bottom carpeted with mosses and in this water my image mirrored; and what with the blood that fouled me, my shaggy hair and beard and the shapeless thing upon my head, an ill-enough rogue I looked.

This pool was fed by a little rill that gurgled down from rocks above and, having filled the basin, flowed out through a wide fissure and down the cliff, to lose itself amid flowery banks 'twixt which it ran bubbling joyously to meet the river. And now, having satisfied my thirst and found the water very sweet and cool, I stripped and, bathing me in this pool, found great solace and content, insomuch that (to my great wonder) I presently found myself whistling like any boy. At last I got me forth mightily refreshed, and that the wind and sun might dry me, strove to cleanse my garments but, finding it a thankless task, I got dressed at last, but my chain shirt I left folded beside the pool and I much more comfortable therefor.

Following the dancing rill, I clambered down the rocks and so into the little valley where ran the stream. Fording this, I came amid thickets where was a glory of flowers of all colours, but one in especial I noticed, white and trumpet-shaped. And here I was often stayed by quickset and creeping plants, their stems very pliant and strong and of the bigness of my little finger. On went I haphazard through a green twilight of leaves, for here (as hath been said) were many trees both great and small, some of which were utterly strange to me, but others I knew for cocos-palms, plantain and breadfruit, the which rejoiced me greatly; and hereabouts I found growing great bunches of black fruit like to grapes, though smaller, and which I would not dare touch until, seeing divers birds peck at them, I ventured to taste and found them excellent.

So, gathering some of these to stay my hunger, I pressed

on despite the heat, for from somewhere before me was the roar of great waters, and forced me a passage with my hatchet until this denser wood gave place to a grove of mighty palm trees; beyond these I came suddenly upon a great, barren rock that overhung a lake whose dark waters were troubled by a torrent hard by that poured into it with a great rushing sound, a torrent of prodigious volume though of no great height. So here (thought I) is Adam's "notable fall of water," and, sitting down, I fell to viewing the place, munching my grapes the while.

Opposite me the lake was bounded by a high-sloping sandy beach with trees beyond, while beyond these again rose that high, tree-clad hill whose barren, rocky dome we had seen from afar. Now the waters of this lake flooded away through a great rent in the surrounding rocks, betwixt which I might catch a glimpse of the distant sea; and beholding this rushing cataract, I must needs fall a-wondering where so great a body of water should come from and to ponder on the marvels of Nature. And from this I got to considering how we might cross this stream, supposing we should explore the island.

I was yet puzzling this when, glancing up, I found the sun already westering, wherefore (not minded to be caught in the dark) I rose and, turning my back on these troubled waters, set out on my return. Ever and anon as I went I caught glimpses of that rocky eminence with its silver thread of falling water whence I had come and, guided by this, strode on amain, bethinking me how best I might cook the goat's flesh for (despite the grapes) I was mightily an hungered. But reaching the denser woods I lost my way, for here nought was to see but the greeny gloom of tangled thickets and dense-growing boskages where I must needs cut a path; yet even so I troubled myself with divers bunches of grapes that my companion might prove my discovery. Thus my progress was slow and wearisome, and night found me still forcing my way through this tangled underwood. Being lost and in the dark, I sat me down to wait for the moon and stayed my hunger

with the grapes meant for better purpose, but one bunch that methought the better I preserved.

Soon this leafy gloom glowed with a silvery radiance, and by this light I went on and so at last came upon the stream. But hereabouts it ran fast and deep and I must needs seek about till I found a ford. Thus the moon was high as, after desperate scramble, I came out upon our grassy plateau and saw the welcome glow of a fire. Moreover as I approached I smelt right savoury and most delectable odour and, hurrying forward, saw my companion crouched upon that stone I have mentioned, her head bowed upon her hands. Hearing my step she glanced up and rose to her feet.

"Are you come at last, Martin?" said she in her sweet voice. "Supper is ready this hour and more!"

"Supper!" said I.

"The goat's flesh. I made a stew, but fear 't is spoiled."

"Indeed," said I, "it smells mighty appetising!"

"I had no salt nor spices, Martin, but in a little garden yonder that is all run wild, I found some sage and sweet herbs."

"Good!" said I. So she brought me to the fire and there in our great turtle shell was as savoury a stew as ever greeted eyes of hungry man.

By her directions and with all due care, I lifted this from the fire and, propping it with stones, we sat down side by side. And now she showed me two of my smaller shells and dipping hers into the stew I did the like, and though we had no salt (the which set my wits at work) and though we lacked for bread, a very excellent meal we made of it, and the moon shedding its glory all about us.

The meal done and while she cleansed the things at a rill that murmured hard by, I made up the fire (for after the heat of the day, night struck chill) and by the time she came back I had the flame crackling merrily. And now as she sat over against me on the stone, I saw she had been weeping. And she, knowing I saw this, nodded her head, scorning all subterfuge.

"I feared you had met with some mischance and lay hurt, Martin — or worse — "

"You mean dead?"

"Aye, dead."

"Would it have mattered so much?"

"Only that I should have died likewise!"

"Because of the loneliness?" asked I.

"Indeed," she sighed, staring into the fire, "because of the loneliness."

"I serve some purpose, then, in the scheme of things?"

"Yes, Martin, you teach a woman how even in this desolation, being weak and defenceless, she may trust to a man's honour and find courage and great comfort in his strength. 'T was foolish of me to be horror-struck at your stained garments when you had been slaving that I might eat."

"'T is all forgot!" said I hastily.

"And as for the murders on the ship — oh, Martin, as if you might ever make me believe you had committed murder — or ever could. You that under all your bitterness are still the same gentle boy I knew so many years ago."

"And why should you be so sure of all this and I but what I am?" said I, staring also into the fire.

"Mayhap because I am a woman with all a woman's instinct to know the evil from the good."

Hereupon I began telling her of my exploration and describing the wonders I had seen, as the fruit trees and waterfall. Whereupon she grew eager to explore the island so soon as she might. In a while I arose and, drawing my knife, turned where I knew was fern a-plenty.

"Where away?" she questioned, rising also.

"I must make you a bed."

"'T is done, Martin, and yours also."

"Mine!" said I, staring. "How should you do all this?"

"With the old, rusty sword, Martin. Come and see!"

So she brought me to the cave, the moon flooding the

place with its pale radiance, and I espied a goodly bed of ferns, very neatly contrived, in one corner.

"Bravely done!" said I.

"At least, Martin, 't will be more easy than your bed of sand, and methinks you shall have no ill dreams to-night."

"Dreams!" quoth I, and bethinking me of my last night's hateful visions (and now beholding the beauty of her) I shivered.

"Are you cold?"

"No!"

"Why, then, good night, Martin."

"Wait!" said I. "Wait!" And hasting out, I brought her the grapes I had saved, telling her that though small she would find them sweet and wholesome.

"Why, Martin!" said she, under her breath as one greatly surprised. "Why, Martin!" and so vanished into her little cave forthwith, and never a word of thanks.

Now being yet haunted by my dreams of yesternight, I went forth into the moonlight and walked there awhile, my eyes uplifted to the glory of the heavens; and now I must needs bethink me of Godby's star-time, of the dark, lonely road, of the beckoning light beyond and the welcoming arms of love. And hereupon I scowled and turned to stare away across the placid sea dimpling 'neath the moon, at the stilly waters of the lagoon, and the white curve of Deliverance Beach below. But, look where I would, I could see only the proud, lovely face and the great, truthful eyes of this woman Joan Brandon, even when my scowling brows were bent on that distant pimento tree beneath whose towering shadow Black Bartlemy had laughed his life out. So in a while I came within the cave and found it dim, for the moonbeam was there no longer, and cast myself upon my bed, very full of gloomy thoughts.

"Martin, I thank you for your grapes. To-morrow we will gather more!"

"Aye, to-morrow!"

"I found a shirt of chain work by the pool, Martin—"

"'T is mine."

"I have set it by against your need."

"Nay, I'm done with it; here is no fear of knives in the back."

"Are you sleepy, Martin?"

"No, but 't is plaguy dark."

"But you are there," said she, "so I do not fear the dark."

"To-morrow I will make a lamp." Here she fell silent and I think to sleep, but as for me I lay long, oppressed by my thoughts. "Aye, verily," said I at last, speaking my thought aloud as had become my custom in my solitude, "to-morrow I will contrive a lamp, for light is a goodly thing." Now here I heard a rustle from the inner cave as she had turned in her sleep, for she spake no word; and so, despite my thoughts, I too presently fell to blessed slumber.

Now if there be any who, reading this my narrative, shall think me too diffuse and particular in the chapters to follow, I hereby do humbly crave their pardon but (maugre my reader's weariness) I shall not abate one word or sentence, since herein I (that by my own folly have known so little of happiness) do record some of the happiest hours that ever man knew, so that it is joy again to write. Therefore to such as would read of rogues and roguish doings, of desperate fights, encounters and affrays, I would engage him to pass over these next few chapters, for he shall find overmuch of these things ere I make an end of this tale of Black Bartlemy's Treasure. Which very proper advice having duly set down, I will again to my narrative.

CHAPTER XXIII

I Become a Jack-of-all-Trades

Early next morning, having bathed me in the pool and breakfasted with my companion on what remained of our goat's flesh, I set to work to build me a fireplace in a fissure of the rock over against the little valley and close beside a great stone, smooth and flat-topped, that should make me an anvil, what time my companion collected a pile of kindling wood. Soon we had the fire going merrily, and whilst my iron was heating, I chose a likely piece of wood and, splitting it with the hatchet, fell to carving it with my knife.

"What do you make now, Martin?"

"Here shall be a spoon for you; 't will help you in your cooking."

"Indeed it will, Martin! But you are very skilful!"

"Nay, 't is simple matter!" said I, whittling away but very conscious of her watchful eyes. "I have outworn many a weary hour carving things with my knife. Given time and patience a man may make anything—"

"Some men!" said she, whereat I grew foolishly pleased with myself. The wood being soft and dry and my knife sharp, the spoon grew apace and her interest with it; and because it was for her (and she so full of pleased wonder) I elaborated upon it here and there until, having shaped it to my fancy, I drew my iron from the fire and with the glowing end burned out the bowl, scraping away the charred wood until I had hollowed it sufficiently, and the spoon was finished. And because she

took such pleasure in it, now and hereafter, I append here a rough drawing of it.

"'T is wonderful!" cried she, turning it this way and that. "'T is admirable!"

"It might be better!" said I, wishing I had given more labour to it.

"I want no better, Martin!" And now she would have me make another for myself.

"Nay, mine can wait. But there is your comb to make."

"How shall you do that, Martin?"

"Of wood, like the Indians, but 't will take time!"

"Why, then, it shall wait with your spoon; first should come necessities."

"As what?"

"Dear Heaven, they be so many!" said she with rueful laugh. "For one thing, a cooking-pot, Martin."

"There is our turtle shell!" said I.

"Why, 't is very well, Martin, for a turtle shell, but clumsy — a little. I would have a pan — with handles if you could contrive. And then plates would be a good thing."

"Handles?" said I, rubbing my chin. "Handles — aye, by all means, a pan with handles, but for this we must have clay."

"And then, Martin, platters would be useful things!"

"So they will!" I nodded. "These I can fashion of wood."

"And then chairs and a table, Martin."

"True!" said I, growing gloomy. "Table and chairs would be easy, had I but a saw! I could make you shelves

and a cupboard had I but fortuned to find a saw instead of this hatchet."

"Nay, Martin," said she, smiling at my doleful visage. "Why this despond? If you can make me so wondrous a spoon with nought but your knife and a piece of driftwood, I know you will make me chairs and table of sorts, saw or no, aye, if our table be but a board laid across stones, and our chairs the same."

"What more do we need?" said I, sighing and scowling at my hatchet that it was not a saw.

"Well, Martin, if there be many goats in the island, and if you could take two or three alive, I have been thinking we might use their milk in many ways if we had pans to put the milk in, as butter and cheese if you could make me a press. Here be a-plenty of ifs, Martin, and I should not waste breath with so many if you were not the man you are!"

"As how?" I questioned, beginning to grind the hatchet on a stone.

"A man strong to overcome difficulty! And with such clever hands!"

Here I ground my hatchet harder than before, but scowled at it no longer.

"And what more would you have?" I questioned.

"If you could make our front door to open and shut?"

"That is easily done! And what else beside?"

"Nay, here is enough for the present. We are like to be very busy people, Martin."

"Why, 't will pass the time!" said I.

"And work is a very good thing!" quoth she thoughtfully.

"It is!" said I, grinding away at my hatchet again.

"Oh, Martin!" sighed she after a while, "I grow impatient to explore our island!"

"And so you shall, so soon as you are strong enough."

"And that will be very soon!" said she. "The sea water is life to me and what with this sweet air, I grow stronger every day."

"Meantime there is much to be done, and here sit I in idleness."

"Nay, you are sharpening your axe, and I am talking to you and wondering what you will make next?"

"A lamp!" said I.

"How, Martin?"

"With a shell, the fat of our goat rendered down, and cotton from my shirt."

"Nay, if you so yearn for a lamp, I can do this much at the least."

"Good!" said I, rising. "Meantime I'll turn carpenter and to begin with, try my hand at a stool for you—"

"But if you have no saw, Martin—?"

"I will make me a chisel instead." Crossing to the fire I found my iron red-hot and, taking it betwixt two flat pieces of wood that served me for tongs, I laid it upon my stone anvil and fell forthwith to beating and shaping it with the hammer-back of my hatchet until I had beaten out a blade some two inches wide. Having cooled my chisel in the brook, I betook me to sharpening it on a stone moistened with water and soon had wrought it to a good edge. I now selected from my timber a board sufficiently wide and, laying this on my anvil stone, began to cut a piece from the plank with hammer and chisel, the which I found a work requiring great care lest I split my wood, and patience since my chisel, being of iron, needed much and repeated grinding. Howbeit it was done at last and the result of my labour a piece of wood about two feet square,—and behold, the seat of my stool.

Nor was my companion idle, for, while all this was a-doing, she set the turtle shell on the fire with water and collops of meat cut with my knife and, soon as it simmered, broke into it divers herbs she had dried in the sun; and so came to watch and question me at my work, yet turning, ever and anon, to stir at the stew with her new spoon, whereby I soon began to snuff a savour methought right appetising. As time passed this savour grew ever more inviting and my hunger with it, my mouth a-water-

ing so that I might scarce endure, as I told her, to her no small pleasure.

"Had I but a handful of salt, Martin!" sighed she.

"Why, comrade," said I, pausing 'twixt two hammer strokes, "wherefore this despond? If you can make stew so savoury and with nought but flesh of an old goat and a few dried herbs, what matter for salt?" At this she laughed and bent to stir at her stew again.

"There's plenty of salt in the sea yonder," said she presently.

"True, but how to come at it?"

"How if we boiled sea water, Martin?"

"'T is method unknown to me," said I, whittling at a leg of my stool, "but we can try."

And now in the seat of my stool I burned three good-sized holes or sockets and, having trimmed three lengths of wood, I fitted these into my socket holes, and there was my stool complete. This done, I must needs call her from her cooking to behold it; and though it was no more than a square of roughish wood set upon three pegs, she praised and viewed it as it had been a great elbow chair and cushioned at that. Hereupon, puffed up with my success, I must immediately begin to think upon building us a table and chairs, but being summoned to dinner, I obeyed her gladly enough. And she seated on her stool with me on the ground beside her and our turtle-shell dish before us, we ate with hearty good will until, our hunger appeased, we fell to talk.

She. 'T is marvellous how well I eat.

Myself. 'T is the open air.

She. And the work, Martin. I have swept and dusted our cottage every hole and corner.

Myself. And found nothing left by its last tenant?

She. Nothing.

Myself. Had he but thought to leave us a saw, our chairs and table would have been the better.

She. Then you will make them, Martin?

Myself. Aye — with time.

She. Oh, 't is bravely determined.

And here, for a moment, I felt the light touch of her hand on my shoulder.

Myself. They will be very unlovely things — very rough —

She. And very wonderful, Martin.

Myself. As to these goats now, 't is an excellent thought to catch some alive and rear them.

She. I could make you excellent cheese and butter.

Myself. If I cannot run them down, I must contrive to wound one or two with arrows.

She. Why, then, Martin, why not head your arrows with pebbles in place of iron points?

Myself. Good again! Or I might make a couple of gins, running nooses cut from the goat skin. Howbeit, I 'll try!

Herewith I arose and she also; then while she busied herself to scald out our turtle shell, I set off to get my goat skin. And finding it where I had left it hanging on a rock to dry, I fell a-cursing to myself for very chagrin; for what with the heat of the rock and the fierce glare of the sun, here was my goat skin all shrivelled and hard as any board. So stood I scowling at the thing, chin in hand and mightily cast down, and so she presently found me; and, beholding my disconsolate look, fell a-laughing.

"Oh, Martin," said she, "'t is well there are some things you cannot do!" Saying which, she took up the skin (albeit it smelt none too sweet) and away she went with it into the cave. So I got me back to my carpentry and, selecting as many boards as I required for the width of my table, fell to cutting them to their proper lengths with hammer and chisel. And despite the shade of the mighty trees that girt us round and the soft wind that stirred, plaguy hot work I found it; but ever and anon she would bring me water, in one of our shells, cool from the spring, or would sit beside me as I laboured, aiding me in a thousand ways and shewing herself vastly capable and quick-

witted; thus as the sun sank westwards I had all my boards cut to an even size and two of the legs, though these, being square, I must needs chop asunder with the hatchet; yet I persevered, being minded to complete the work ere nightfall if possible.

"But where are your nails?" said she, where she sat watching.

"Our nails be too few and precious," quoth I, pausing to resharpen my hatchet. "I shall burn holes and pin our table together with pegs."

"Why, then," said she readily, "let me split and shape you some pegs."

"Spoke like a true comrade!" said I impulsively. "Sometimes I do forget you are—"

"A woman?" she questioned as I paused; and I wondered to see her eyes so bright and shining. "Here is twice you have named me your comrade, Martin, and so I will be, so long as I may. You sometimes would call me your comrade when we played together years ago, and 't is a good name, Martin. Come, now, teach me how I must make these pegs for our table." So I showed her how to split divers lengths of wood and shape these as round and smooth as might be, the while I bored holes for them with a heated iron; and thus we sat side by side at our labour, seldom speaking, yet I (for one) very well content.

At length, with her assistance, I began setting the framework of our table together, joining and pinning it with my wooden pegs driven mighty secure; last of all I laid the boards across and, pinning these in place, there was our table; and though it was most rude and primitive so far as looks went, yet very serviceable we were to find it.

"Well, Martin," said she, when I had borne it into our cave, "methinks my shelves and cupboard are none so far to seek!" Here she falls to patting this unlovely thing and viewing it as it were the wonder of the world; and I must needs leap upon it to prove its strength.

"'T is over-heavy!" said I, giving it a final shake, "but 't will serve!"

"To admiration!" said she, smoothing its rough surface with gentle hand. "To-night we will sup from it. Which reminds me that supper is to cook and our meat nearly all gone, Martin, though we have plenty of plantains left." So I told her I would go fetch what remained of the carcass after supper, so soon as the moon rose. And now whiles she bustled to and fro, I chose me a little piece of wood and, sitting where I might watch her at her labours, began to carve her the hairpin I had promised.

"Our third cave should make us a very good larder!" said she, busy at her new table preparing supper.

"Aye."

"'T is so mavellous cool!"

"Aye."

"I think, because the pool lieth above it."

"Mayhap!"

"Indeed, these are wonderful caves, Martin."

"They are."

"Who lived here before us, I wonder?"

"Penfeather, like as not."

"Why should you think this?"

"Well, that door yonder was never a carpenter's work, yet 't is well-made and furnished with a loophole, narrow and horizontal to give a lateral fire, the which I have seen but once ere this. Then again the timbers of this door do carry many marks of shot, and Adam Penfeather is no stranger to such; violence and danger, steel and bullet seem to follow him."

"Why, so, Martin? He hath ever seemed a man very quiet and gentle, most unlike such rough sailormen as I have seen hitherto."

"True," said I—"but 'neath this attitude of mind is a wily cunning and desperate, bloodthirsty courage and determination worthy any pirate or buccaneer of them all."

"Why, courage and determination are good things,

Martin. And as for Master Penfeather, he is, as I do know, a skilful navigator and very well-read, more especially in the Scriptures, and methought your friend."

"For his own purposes!" quoth I.

"And what are these, Martin?"

At this I merely scowled at the wood I was carving, whereupon she questioned me further:

"Master Adam is such a grave and sober man!"

"True!" said I.

"And so wise in counsel—"

"Say, rather, cunning!"

"Though to be sure he once had a poor man beaten cruelly."

"Wherein he was exactly right!" said I, grinding my teeth at memory of Red Andy. "Aye, there Penfeather was very right; this fellow was a vile and beastly rogue!"

"What dreadful thing had he done, Martin?"

"Stared at you," said I, and stopped; and, glancing up, found her regarding me with look mighty strange.

"Did you mind so much?" she questioned.

"No whit, madam. Why should I?"

"Aye, why, indeed!" said she and turns to her cooking again and I to my carving; yet in a little, hearing her gasp, I glanced up to find her nigh stifled with her laughter.

"Ha, why must ye laugh, madam?" I demanded.

"Oh, Martin!" said she. "And must this poor man be whipped—and for a mere look? And you so fierce withal! I fear there be many men do merit whipping, if this be sin so great."

"I see no reason in your laughter, my lady!" quoth I, scowling up at her.

"Because you have no gift of laughter, my lord!" answered she, and turned her back on me.

Here I came nigh to tossing her half-finished hairpin into the fire; but, seeing her turn her head, carved on for very shame.

"And are you so very angry, Martin?" I bent to sharpen

my knife. "I would that you might laugh yourself — once in a while, Martin." I tested my knife on my thumb. "You are always so grave, Martin, so very solemn and young!" Finding my knife still blunt, I went on sharpening it. Here and all suddenly she was beside me on her knees and clasping my knife-hand in hers. "Indeed, I had no thought to anger you, Martin. Are you truly angered, or is it only that you are so very — hungry?" Now here I glanced at her and, beholding all the roguish mischief in her eyes, try how I might, I could not but smile too.

"A little of both, comrade!" said I. "Though verily I am a surly animal by nature."

"Indeed, yes, Martin," she sighed, "yet a very comfortable animal and though strong and fierce and woefully trying at times, a very gentle animal to such as know you."

"And do you know me so well?"

"Better than you think, oh, a great deal better! Because I am a woman. And now are we friends again?"

"Yes!" said I heartily. "Yes!" And away she went to her cooking and I mighty glad I had not destroyed her hairpin the which (my knife being sharp) I began to ornament with all sorts of elaborations. Presently back she came, spoon in one hand, stool in the other, and sat to watch me at work.

"What do you make now, Martin?"

"A pin for your hair."

"Why, 't is beautiful!"

"'T is scarce begun yet!"

Here she must needs lavish all manner of praises on my skill until I came nigh cutting myself.

"How many will you make me, Martin?"

"As many as you will."

"Three should suffice."

"Why, you have a prodigious lot of hair."

"Do you think so, Martin?" asked she, glancing down at the two great braids that fell over her bosom well-nigh

to her waist. "'T was well enough in England, but here 't is greatly in my way and hampers me in my work. I had thought of cutting it off."

"Then don't."

"Why not, Martin?"

"Well," said I, glancing at the nearest braid that showed coppery lights where the setting sun caught it, "well, because —" and finding nought else to say, I fell to my carving again and away she went to her cooking.

"Martin," said she at last, "what do you know of Master Penfeather? Where did you fall in with him, and why is his life so threatened?"

"All by reason of Black Bartlemy's Treasure!"

"Treasure!" said she; and back she came and on to her stool, all in a moment. "Tell me of it, Martin!"

"'T is a great treasure of gold and jewels and such."

"And who is Black Bartlemy?"

"A foul rogue of a pirate that was killed by a poor Spanish lady and lieth buried with her under the great pimento tree on the beach yonder."

"Oh, Martin!" said she, getting up that she might behold the tree. "I knew, I knew 't was an evil place! And the poor lady died too?"

"He killed her after she had stabbed him!"

"How do you know of this?"

"Adam Penfeather told me; he saw it done!" Hereupon she sat down and was silent awhile.

"And where is this great treasure?"

"On this island!"

"Here?" said she, starting to her feet again. "Here, Martin?"

"Aye, 't was this I was despatched to secure, after I had been rapped over the head with a pistol-butt!"

"And how must you find it?"

"I never shall; the secret of it was in the packet I tossed overboard. Adam may find it himself an he will."

"And you have no desire for this treasure?"

"None in the world." And now (at her earnest solici-

tation) I told her all my association with Adam, of my haunted days and nights aboard ship and my suspicions of Tressady; only I spoke nothing of Adam's avowed intent to steal the *Faithfull Friend* to his own purposes.

"Oh, wonderful!" said she, when I had done, and then again; "Oh, wonderful! So this was why we were cut adrift. Truly Master Penfeather hath quick and subtle wits."

"A guileful rogue — and very wily!" said I, clenching my fist.

"But wherein is he rogue, Martin?"

"How!" quoth I, "was it not a wicked, vile and most roguish act to set you adrift thus, to run the peril of sea and a desolate island — "

"What other could he do, Martin, and the ship good as taken by the mutineers? I heard them shouting — for me!" and here she shivered. "True, we have faced perils, have lost all our stores, but at least here am I — safe with you, Martin!" Saying which, she rose and presently summoned me to our evening meal.

Having supped, I took beneath my arm my trusty sword (the which I had sharpened and burnished as well as I might) being minded to fetch what remained of our goat; but now she came very earnest to go with me, and I agreeing readily enough, we set out together forthwith.

CHAPTER XXIV

Of my Encounter Beneath Bartlemy's Tree

The moon was very bright, casting great, black shadows athwart our way, and now, once our familiar surroundings were left behind, we fell silent or spake only in low voice, awed by the universal hush of all things; for the night was very still and hot and breathless, and not a leaf stirred and no sound to hear save the unceasing roar of the surf.

"Martin," said she, very softly, "here is a night of such infinite quiet that I grow almost afraid—"

"Of what?" I demanded, pausing to look down on her where she limped beside me. And then, 'twixt my teeth, "Is it me you fear?"

"Ah, no, no!" cried she, slipping her hand within my arm. "Never, never that, you foolish Martin!" And here she looked at me with such a smile that I must needs glance otherwhere, yet methought her cheeks showed pale in the moonlight.

"Why, then, what 's amiss?" I questioned, as we went on again and I very conscious of her hand yet upon my arm.

"I know not," she sighed, "'t is the stillness, mayhap, the loneliness and dreadful solitude; I feel as though some danger threatened."

"A storm, belike," said I, glancing round about us and across the placid sea.

"Oh, Martin, 't is hateful to be a woman! Why should I fear thus and no reason; 't is folly!" And here she must pause to stamp her foot at herself. "And yet I do fear!" said she after a while. "Oh, Martin, glad am I to have man like you beside me."

"Though another man might serve as well!" said I. "Of course?"

"Of course, Martin!"

At this I turned to scowl at the placid sea again.

"Any man?" said I at last.

"Oh, Martin, no — how foolish you do grow — any man might be evil as Black Bartlemy."

"I've heard I am much like him in looks."

"But then you are Martin, and he was — Black Bartlemy."

After this we were silent a great while nor spoke again until we had traversed the whole length of Deliverance Sands, then:

"What manner of man?" I demanded.

Now at this she turned to look at me, and I saw her lips quiver to a little smile that came but to vanish again.

"Something your sort, Martin, but without your gloom and evil tempers, and one who could laugh betimes."

"Sir Rupert?" quoth I.

"He was indeed very gay and merry-hearted!" said she.

"Yet suffered you to be beguiled and cast adrift to your great peril!"

"But stayed to do his share of the fighting, Martin."

"Ha!" said I, scowling, "'t is great pity we may not change places, he and I!"

"Would you change places with him — willingly, Martin?"

"Aye — I would so!" At this she whipped her hand from my arm and turned to frown up at me whiles I scowled sullenly on her.

"Why, then, Master Conisby," said she, "I would you were anywhere but here. And know this — when you scowl so, all sullen-eyed, I know you for the very image of Black Bartlemy!"

Now as she spake thus, we were standing almost in the very shadow of that tall pimento tree beneath which Bartlemy had laughed and died, and now from this gloomy

shadow came something that whirred by my ear and was gone. But in that moment I had swept my companion behind a rock and, with sword advanced, leapt straight for the tree; and there, in the half-light, came on a fantastic shape and closed with it in deadly grapple. My rusty sword had snapped short at the first onset, yet twice I smote with the broken blade while, arm locked with arm, we writhed and twisted. To and fro we staggered and so out into the moonlight, and I saw my opponent for an Indian. His long hair was bound by a fillet that bore a feather, and a feather cloak was about him; this much I saw as we strove together. Twice he broke my hold and twice I grappled him, and ever we strove more fiercely, he with his knife and I with my broken sword, and once I felt the searing pain of a wound. And now as we swayed, locked together thus, I saw, over his bowed shoulder, my lady where she crouched against a rock to watch us and, knowing myself hurt and my opponent very mighty and strong, great fear seized me.

"Run, Joan!" cried I, gasping. "Oh, Damaris—run back!"

"Never, Martin—never without you. If you must die—I come with you!"

Mightily heartened by her voice, I strove desperately to secure the hold I sought, but my antagonist was supple as any eel; moreover his skin was greased, after the manner of Indian warriors, but in our struggling we had come nigh to the rock where crouched my lady and, biding my time, I let go my broken sword and, seizing him by a sort of collar he wore, I whirled him backward against the rock, saw his knife fly from his hold at the impact, felt his body relax and grow limp and then, as my grasp loosened, staggered back from a blow of his knee and saw him leap for the lagoon. But I (being greatly minded to make an end of him and for good reasons) set after him hotfoot and so came running hard behind him to the reef; here, the way being difficult, I must needs slack my pace but he, surer-footed, ran fleetly enough until he was gotten well-

nigh to the middle of the reef. There for a moment he paused and, looking back on me where I held on in pursuit, I saw his dark face darker for a great splash of blood; suddenly he raised one hand aloft, shaking it to and fro, and so vanished down the rocks. When I came there it was to behold him paddling away in a long, narrow piragua. Panting I stood to watch (and yearning for a bow or firelock) until his boat was hardly to be seen amid the moonlit ripples that furrowed the placid waters; yet still I watched, but, feeling a hand touch me, turned to find my lady beside me.

"Martin," said she, looking up at me great-eyed, "oh, Martin, you are wounded! Come let me cherish your hurts!"

"Why, Damaris," said I, yet panting with my running, "you said this to me when I fought the big village boy years agone."

"Come, Martin, you are bleeding."

"Nought to matter — and I let him go — to bring others like enough — to-morrow I will make my bow — nay — I can walk." But now indeed sea and rocks grew all blurred and misty on my sight, and twice I must needs rest awhile ere we came on Deliverance Sands. And so homewards, a weary journey whereof I remember nothing save that I fell a-grieving that I had suffered this Indian to escape.

So came we to the plateau at last, her arm about me and mine upon her shoulders; and, angered at my weakness, I strove to go alone, yet reeled in my gait like a drunken man and so suffered her to get me into our cave as she would. Being upon my bed she brought the lamp and, kneeling by me, would examine my hurt whether I would or no, and I being weak, off came my shirt. And then I heard her give a little, gasping cry.

"Is it so bad?" asked I, finding my tongue more unready than usual.

"Nay, 'tis not — not your — wound, Martin."

"Then what?"

"Your poor back — all these cruel scars! Oh, Martin!"

"Nought but the lash! They whipped us well aboard the *Esmeralda* galleass." In a while I was aware of her soft, gentle hands as she bathed me with water cool from the spring; thereafter she made a compress of moss and leaves and, laying it to my wound, bound it there as well as she might, the which I found very grateful and comforting. This done she sat close beside me to hush and soothe me to sleep as I had been a sick child. And I, lying 'twixt sleep and wake, knew I might not rest until I told her what I had in mind.

"Damaris," said I, "this night I lied to you — I would not have another man in my place — now or — ever!" and so sank to sleep.

Next day I awoke early, and my wound was very painful and troublesome; this notwithstanding, I presently got me out into the early sunshine and, to my wonder, found the fire already lighted and no sign of my companion. Hereupon I fell to shouting and hallooing but, getting no answer, sat me down mighty doleful and, seeing her stool where it stood straddled on its three legs, I cursed it for its unsightliness and turned my back on it. And now, crouched in the sunlight, I grew mightily sorry for myself thus solitary and deserted, and the hurt in my shoulder all on fire. And in a little, my self-love gave place to a fretful unease, so that I must needs shout her name again and again, listening for sound of her voice, for some rustle to tell me she was nigh, but heard only the faint booming of the surf. So I arose and (albeit I found my legs mighty unwilling) came out upon the plateau, but look how and where I might, saw only a desolation of sea and beach, whereupon, being greatly disquieted, I set out, minded to seek her. By the time I reached Deliverance the sun was well up, its heat causing my wound to throb and itch intolerably, and I very fretful and peevish. But as I tramped on and no trace of her, I needs must remember how I had sought her hereabouts when I had thought

her dead, whereupon a great and unreasoning panic seized me, and I began to run. And then, all at once, I spied her. She was sitting upon a rock, her head bowed wearily upon her hands and, seeing how her shoulders heaved, I knew she was bitterly a-weeping. Therefore I stopped and, glancing from her desolate figure round about upon her desolate surroundings, knew this grim solitude for the reason of her tears. At this thought a wave of hot anger swept over me and a rage that, like my panic, reasoned not as, clenching my fists, I strode on. Suddenly she looked up and, seeing me, rose at once and, lifting the great turtle shell, limped wearily towards me with this borne before her.

"Ha," said I, viewing her tear-wet cheeks as she came, "must ye weep, madam, must ye weep?"

"May I not weep, Martin?" said she, head pitifully a-droop. "Come, let us go back; you look very pale, 't was wrong of you to come so far! Here is our breakfast; 't is the best I can find." And she showed me a few poor shellfish.

"Give me the turtle shell!" said I.

"Indeed I can bear it very easily, Martin. And you so white and haggard — your wound is troubling you. Come, let me bathe it —"

"Give me the turtle shell!"

"No, Martin, be wise and let us —"

"Will you gainsay me — d' ye defy me?"

"Oh, Martin, no, but you are so weak —"

"Weak! Am I so?" And stooping, I caught her up in my arms, upsetting the turtle shell and spilling the result of her labours. So with her crushed to me I turned and set off along the beach, and she, lying thus helpless, must needs fall to weeping again and I, in my selfish and blind folly to plaguing the sweet soul therewith; as:

"England is far away, my lady Joan! Here be no courtly swains, no perfumed, mincing lovers, to sigh and bow and languish for you. Here is solitude, lady. Desolation hath you fast and is not like to let you go; here

mayhap shall you live — and die! An ill place this and, like Nature, strong and cruel. An ill place and an ill rogue for company. You named me rogue once, and rogue forsooth you find me. England is far away — but God — is farther — "

Thus I babbled, scowling down on her, as I bore her on until my breath came in great gasps, until the sweat poured from me, until I sank to my knees and, striving to rise, found I might not and glaring wildly up saw we were come 'neath Bartlemy's cursed pimento tree. Then she, loosing herself from my fainting arms, bent down to push the matted hair from my eyes, to support my failing strength in tender arms, and to lower my heavy head to her knee.

"Foolish child!" she murmured. "Poor, foolish child! England is very far, I know, but this I know also, Martin; God is all about us, and here in our loneliness within these great solitudes doth walk beside us."

"Yet you weep!" says I.

"Aye, I did, Martin."

"Because — of the — loneliness?"

"No, Martin."

"Your — lost friends?"

"No, Martin."

"Then — wherefore?"

"Oh, trouble not for thing so small; a woman's tears come easily, they say."

"Not yours, Joan. Yet you wept — "

"Your wound bleeds afresh; lie you there and stir not till I bring water to bathe it." And away she hastened, and I, burning in a fever of doubt and questioning, must needs lie there and watch her bring the turtle shell to fill it at the little rill that bubbled in that rocky cleft as I have described before. While this was a-doing I stared up at the pimento tree and, bethinking me of Black Bartlemy and the poor Spanish lady and of my hateful dream, I felt sudden great shame, for here had I crushed my lady in arms as cruel, well-nigh, as his. This put me to such

remorse that I might not lie still and strove to rise up, yet got no further than my knees; and 't was thus she found me. And now, when I would have sued her forgiveness for my roughness, she soothed me with gentle words (though what she spake I knew not) and gave me to drink and so fell to cherishing my hurt until, my strength coming back somewhat, I got to my feet and suffered her to bring me where she would, speaking no word, since in my fevered brain I was asking myself his question, viz:

"Why must she weep?"

Now whether the Indian's knife was poisoned or no I cannot say, but for two days I lay direly sick and scarce able to crawl, conscious only of the soothing tones of her voice and the touch of her hands. But upon the third day, opening my eyes, I found myself greatly better though marvellous weak. And as I stirred, she was beside me on her knees.

"Drink this, Martin!" said she. And I, obeying, found it was excellent broth. And when I had drunk all, I closed my eyes mighty content and so lay a while.

"My Lady Joan," says I at last, "wherefore did you weep?"

"Oh, Martin!" she sighed, "'t was because that morning I had sought so long and found so little to give you and you so sick!" Here was silence a while.

"But whence cometh the broth?" quoth I at last.

"I caught a young goat, Martin; in a noose of hide set among the rocks; and then — then I had to kill it — oh, Martin!"

"You — caught and — killed a goat!"

"Yes, Martin. You had to be fed — but oh, the poor thing — !"

"Surely," said I at last, "oh, surely, never had man so brave a comrade as I. How may I ever show you all my gratitude?"

"By going to sleep, Martin. Your wound is well-nigh healed, sleep is all you need." And sleep I did; though at

that time and for many nights to come my slumber was haunted by a fear that the Indian was back again and others with him, all stealing upon us to our torment and destruction. But in this night I awoke parched with thirst, and the night very hot and with the moon making pale glory all about me. So I got to my feet, albeit with much ado, being yet very feeble, when her voice reached me.

"What is it, Martin? Are you thirsty?"

"Beyond enduring!" says I.

"Bide you still!" she commanded, and the next moment she flitted soft-footed into the moonlight with one of our larger shells to bring me water from the rill near by; but seeing me on my feet, looked on me glad-eyed then shook reproving head.

"Lie you down!" said she, mighty serious. "Lie you down!"

"Nay, I'll go myself—" But she was past me and out of the cave or ever I might stay her; but scarce had I seated myself upon my bed than she was back again, the shell brimming in her hands; so I drank eagerly enough, but with my gaze on the sheen of white, rounded arm and dimpled shoulder. Having emptied the shell, I stooped to set it by, and when I looked again she had vanished into her own small cave.

"I am glad you are so greatly better, Martin," said she from the dark.

"Indeed, I am well again!" quoth I. "To-morrow I make my bow and arrows. Had I done this before, the Indian should never have got away."

"Think you he will return and with others, Martin?"

"No," said I (albeit my mind misgave me). "Yet 't is best to be prepared, so I will have a good stout pike also in place of my broken sword."

"And strengthen our door, Martin?"

"Aye, I will so; 't is a mighty stout door, thank God."

"Thank God!" repeated she, mighty reverent. "And now go to sleep, Martin." So here was silence wherein I

could hear the murmur of the breakers afar and the soft bubbling of the rill hard by, and yet sleep I could not.

"And you caught and killed a goat!" said I.

"Nay, Martin, 't is a horror I would forget."

"And you did it that I might eat?"

"Yes, Martin. And now hush thee."

"Though indeed," said I in a little, "thus much you would have done for any man, to be sure!"

"To be sure, Martin — unless he were man like Black Bartlemy. Good night and close your eyes. Are they shut?"

"Yes," said I. "Good night to thee, comrade."

CHAPTER XXV

I Try My Hand at Pottery

Next morning, having bathed me in the pool, I descended thence to find breakfast a-cooking, two noble steaks propped before the fire on skewers stuck upright in the ground, a device methought very ingenious, and told her so; the which did seem to please her mightily.

"Are you hungry, Martin?"

"'T is a poor word for it!" said I, sniffing at the roasting steaks.

"Alas! Our poor turtle shell is all perished with the fire, Martin; if you could but contrive me a pan with handles! I have found plenty of clay along the river bank yonder." Here she gave me my steak on a piece of wood for platter and I, being so sharp-set, must needs burn my mouth in my eagerness, whereon she gravely reproved me as I had been a ravenous boy, yet laughed thereafter to see me eat with such huge appetite; now a bite of plantain, and now a slice of steak cut with my knife.

"As to your pan with handles," said I, my hunger appeased somewhat, "I will set about it as soon as I have made my bow and arrows."

"There is no need of them," quoth she and, rising, away she went and presently came back with a goodly bow and quiver full of arrows.

"Lord love you!" said I, leaping up in my eagerness. "Here 's mighty good weapon!" As indeed it was, being longer than most Indian bows and of good power. Moreover, it was tufted with feathers rare to fancy and garnished here and there with fillets of gold-work very artificially wrought, as were also the arrows. Nine of these there were in a quiver of tanned leather, adorned with feather-work and gold beads, so that I did not doubt but

that their late owner had been of some account among his fellows.

"I found them two days ago, Martin, but kept them until you should be well again. And this I found too!" And she showed me a gold collar of twisted wire, delicately wrought. All of the which put me in high good humour, and I was minded to set off there and then to try a shot at something, but she prevailed upon me to finish my meal first; the which I did, though hastily.

"There was a knife also," said I suddenly.

"Yes, Martin, but I threw it into the lagoon."

"Oh, folly!" said I.

"Nay, we have two knives already, and this as I do think was poisoned."

"No matter; 'twas a goodly knife — why must you throw it away?"

"Because I was so minded!" says she, mighty serene, and regarding me with her calm, level gaze. "Never scowl, Martin, though indeed 'twas goodly knife with handle all gold-work." At this I scowled the more, and she must needs laugh, calling me Black Bartlemy, whereon I turned my back on her, and she fell a-singing to herself.

"Think you these arrows are poisoned also?" asked she as I rose.

At this, I emptied them from the quiver and, through their iron barbs looked innocent enough, I held each in the fire until I judged I had rendered them harmless, if poisoned they were indeed.

And now, though sore tempted to try my skill with this good bow, I followed her down to the river bank to try my hand at pottery, though taking good care to carry my bow with me.

Being come to the river, I laid aside bow and quiver and, cutting divers lumps of clay (the which seemed very proper to my purpose), I fell to kneading these lumps until I had wrought them to a plastic consistency, and so (keeping my hands continually moistened) I began to mould and shape a pot to her directions. And now, since

I was about it, I determined to have as many as need be and of different sizes. My first was a great ill-looking thing and my second little better, but as I progressed I grew more skilful, so that after some while I had six pots of varying size and shape and each with handles; and, though ill things to look at, my lady found them all she desired.

"Surely they are very clumsy?" says I, viewing them doubtfully.

"But very strong, Martin!"

"And very ponderous!"

"But they have handles, Martin!"

"And very ill-shaped!"

"'T is no matter, so long as they will hold water, Martin."

Hereupon, heartened by her encouragement, I tried my hand at a set of dishes, platters and the like, for as I grew more expert at the art, my interest increased. So I laboured all the morning, working 'neath a tree upon the river bank, with my pots set out to dry in the full glare of the sun, all of a row, and I, in my heart, not a little proud of them. But turning to look at them after some while I saw divers of them beginning to crack and gape here and there with the sun's heat, whereon my vain pride gave place to sudden petulant anger and, leaping up, I demolished them, one and all, with a couple of savage kicks.

"Oh, Martin!" cried my lady, desponding. "Is all your labour wasted? Are you done?"

"No!" said I, clenching my teeth, "I begin now!" And down I sat to my clay-kneading again. But this time I worked it more thoroughly, and so began to mould my pots and pipkins over again, and she aiding me as well as she might. This time the thing came easier, at the which my companion did admire and was very full of encouragement as the vessels took shape under my hands.

"Come, Martin," said she at last, "'t is dinner time!"

"No matter!" quoth I.

"Will you not eat?"

"No!" said I, mighty determined. "Here sit I nor will I go eat till I can contrive you a pot worthy the name." And I bent to my work again; but finally missing her from beside me, turned to see her seated upon the grassy bank and with two roasted steaks set out upon two great green leaves, a delectable sight.

"Pray lend me your knife, Martin."

"What, have you brought dinner hither?" asked I.

"To be sure, Martin."

"Why, then — !" said I and laving the clay from my hands came beside her and, using our knife alternately, a very pleasant meal we made of it.

All that afternoon I wrought at our pots until I had made a dozen or so of all sizes, and each and every furnished with one or more handles; and though I scowled at a crack here and there, they looked none the less serviceable on the whole, and were hardening apace.

"And now, comrade," quoth I, rising, "now we will fire them." So having collected wood sufficient, I reached for my biggest pot (the which being made first was the hardest set) and taking it up with infinite care off tumbled the handles. At this I was minded to dash the thing to pieces, but her touch restrained me and I set it down, staring at it mighty discomfited and downcast; whereat she laughed right merrily.

"Oh, Martin," said she, "never gloom so, 't is an excellent pot even without handles; indeed I do prefer it so!"

"No," said I, "handles you wanted, and handles you shall have!" So, taking a stick that lay handy, I sharpened it to a point and therewith bored me two holes beneath the lip of the pot and other two opposite. "This pot shall have iron handles," said I, "unless it perish in the fire." Then, setting the pots as close as might be, I covered them with brushwood and thereupon (and with infinite caution) builded a fire and presently had it a-going. Now I would have stayed to tend the fire, but my companion showed me the sun already low, vowed I

had done enough, that I was tired, &c. So, having set upon the fire wood enough to burn a good time, I turned away and found myself weary even as she said.

"Goat's flesh," said I, as we sat side by side after supper, "goat's flesh is an excellent, wholesome diet and, as you cook it, delicious."

"'T is kind of you to say so, Martin, but—"

"We have had it," continued I, "we have had it boiled and baked—"

"And roast and stewed, and broiled across your iron bolts, Martin, and yet 't is always goat's flesh and I do yearn for a change and so do you."

"Lord!" said I, "you do read my very thoughts sometimes—"

"Is that so wonderful, Martin?"

"Why, a man's thoughts are but thoughts," said I, watching where she braided a long tress of her hair.

"Some men's thoughts are so easily read!"

"Are mine?"

"Sometimes, Martin!" Now at this I blenched and well I might, and she smiled down at the long tress of hair she was braiding and then glanced at me mighty demure; quoth she: "But only sometimes, Martin. Now, for instance, you are wondering why of late I have taken to wearing my hair twisted round my head and pinned with these two small pieces of wood in fashion so unsightly—"

"Aye, truly," said I, wondering, "indeed, and so I was! Though I do not think it unsightly!"

"I wear it so, Martin, first because my hairpins are yet to make, and second because I would not have you find my hairs in your baked goat, boiled goat, roast, fried or stewed goat. And speaking of goat brings us back where we began, and we began yearning for a change of food."

"As to that," said I, taking her half-finished hairpin from my pocket and drawing my knife, "the lagoon is full of fish had I but a hook—"

"Or a net, Martin."

"How should we contrive our net?"

"In the woods all about us do grow vines very strong and pliable; would these serve, think you?"

"Ha — an excellent thought!" said I. "To-morrow we will attempt it. As to fishhooks, I might contrive them out of my nails hammered small, though I fear they'd be but clumsy. Had I but a good stout pin — "

"I have two, Martin, here in my shoe buckles."

"Show me!" Stooping, she slipped off one of her shoes and gave it to me; and turning it over in my hand I saw the poor little thing all cut and torn and in woeful estate.

"I must contrive you other shoes and soon!" said I.

"Can you make shoes, Martin?"

"I'll tell you this to-morrow."

"Oh, Martin, 't would be wonderful if you could, and a great comfort to me."

"Why, then, you shall have them, though unlovely things they'll be, I fear."

"No matter, so long as they keep out sharp stones and briars, Martin."

"Your foot is wonderfully small!" said I, studying her shoe.

"Is it, Martin? Why, 't is a very ordinary foot, I think. And the pins are behind the buckles."

Sure enough, I found these silver buckles furnished each with a good stout pin well-suited to my design; so, breaking them from the buckles, I had soon bent them into hooks and (with the back of my knife and a stone) I shaped each with a small ring a-top whereby I might secure them to my line; and though they had no barbs, I thought they might catch any fish were I quick enough.

"How shall you do for a line, Martin?"

"I shall take the gut of one of our goats and worsted unravelled from my stocking."

"Will worsted be strong enough?"

"I shall make it fourfold."

"Nay, I will plait it into a line for you!"

"Good!" quoth I. And whipping off one of my stockings, I unravelled therefrom sufficient of the worsted.

"But what shall you do for stockings?" said she, while this was a-doing.

"I will make me leggings of goat's skin."

So she took the worsted and now, sitting in a patch of radiant moonlight, fell to work, she weaving our fishline with fingers very quick and dexterous and I carving away at the pin for her hair.

"How old are you, Martin?" asked she suddenly.

"Twenty-seven."

"And I shall be twenty-six to-morrow."

"I judged you older."

"Do I look it, Martin?"

"Yes — no, no!"

"Meaning what, Martin?"

"You do seem older, being no silly maid but of a constant mind and one to endure hardship. Also you are very brave in peril, very courageous and high-hearted. Moreover, you are wise."

"Do you think me all this?" said she softly. "And wherefore?"

"I have never heard you complain yet — save of me — and I have never seen you afraid. Moreover, you caught a goat and killed it!"

"You are like to make me vain of my so many virtues, Martin!" laughed she; yet her laugh was very soft and her eyes kind, when she looked at me.

"This hairpin shall be my birthday gift to you."

"And surely none like to it in the whole world, Martin!"

After this we worked a great while, speaking no word; but presently she showed me my fishline very featly plaited and a good five feet long, the which did please me mightily; and so I told her.

"Heigho!" said she, leaning back against the rock. "Our days grow ever more busy!"

"And will do!" quoth I. "Here is strange, rude life for you, days of hardship and labour unceasing. Your hands shall grow all hard and rough and yourself sick with longing to be hence —"

"Alas, poor me!" she sighed.

"Why, 't will be no wonder if you grieve for England and ease," said I; "'t will be but natural."

"Oh, very, Martin!"

"For here are you," I went on, beginning to scowl up at the waning moon, "here are you bred up to soft and silken comfort, very dainty and delicate, and belike with lovers a-plenty, courtly gallants full of fine phrases and eager for your service."

"Well, Martin?"

"Instead of the which you have this island!"

"An earthly paradise!"

"And myself!"

"A foolish being and gloomy!" said she. "One that loveth to be woeful and, having nought to grieve him for the moment, must needs seek somewhat! So will I to bed ere he find it!"

"Look now," quoth I, as she rose, "in losing the world you do lose everything—"

"And you also, Martin."

"Nay," said I, "in losing the world of yesterday I may find more than ever I possessed!"

"Meaning you are content, Martin?"

"Is any one ever content in this world?"

"Well—I—might be!" said she slowly. "But you—I do fear you will never know true content; it is not in you, I think."

And off she went to bed, leaving me very full of thought. Howbeit the moon being very bright (though on the wane) I stayed there until I had finished her hairpin, of the which I give here a cut, viz:

CHAPTER XXVI

Tells How I Found a Secret Cave

Next morning I was up mighty early and away to the little valley, first to view my pots and then to pick some flowers for her birthday, remembering her great love for such toys. Coming to the ashes of the fire, I must needs fall a-cursing most vilely, like the ill fellow I was, and to swearing many great and vain oaths (and it her birthday!). For here were my pots (what the fire had left of them) all swollen and bulged with the heat, warped and misshapen beyond imagining.

So I stood plucking my beard and cursing them severally and altogether and fetched the nearest a kick that nigh broke my toe and set the pot leaping and bounding a couple of yards, but all unbroken. Going to it, I took it up and found it not so much as scratched and hard as any stone. This comforted me somewhat and made me to regret my ill language, more especially having regard to this day, being as it were a day apart. And now as I went on, crossing the stream at a place where were stepping-stones, set there by other hands than mine, as I went, I say, I must needs think what a surly, ill-mannered fellow I was, contrasting the gross man I was become with the gentle, sweet-natured lad I had been. "Well, but" (thought I, excusing myself) "the plantations and a rowing-bench be a school where a man is apt to learn nought but evil and brutality; my wrongs have made me what I am. But again" (blaming myself) "wrong and hardship, cruelty and suffering do not debase all men, as witness the brave Frenchman that was whipped to death beside me in the *Esmeralda* galleass. Wrong and suffering either lift a man to greatness or debase him to the very brute! She had said as much to me once. And she was right" (thought I) "for the Frenchman had died

the noble gentleman he was born, whiles I, as well-born as he and suffering no greater wrong than he, according to his own account, I had sullied myself with all the vileness and filth of slavedom, had fought and rioted with the worst of them." And now, remembering the shame of it all, I sat me down in the shade of a tree and fell to gloomy and sad reflection, grieving sorely over things long past and forgotten until now, and very full of remorse and scorn of myself.

"Howbeit" (thought I) "if rogue and brute I am (which is beyond all doubt) I will keep such for my own kind and she shall know nought of it!" And here, getting upon my knees, I took a great and solemn oath to this effect, viz: "Never by look, or word, or gesture to give her cause for shame or fear so long as we should abide together in this solitude, so aid me God!"

This done, I arose from my knees and betook me to culling flowers, great silver lilies and others of divers hues, being minded to lay them on the threshold of her door to greet her when she should arise. With these in my arms I recrossed the brook and, stepping out from a thicket, came full upon her ere she was aware; and seeing her suddenly I stood like any fool, my poor flowers hidden behind me. She had taken up one of my misshapen pots and was patting it softly as she viewed it, and a little smile on her red lips. All at once she turned and, spying me, came towards me, all smiling, fresh and radiant as the morning.

"Oh, Martin," says she, turning the pot this way and that, "oh, Martin, 't is wonderful —"

"'T is an abomination!" quoth I.

"And 't will hold water!"

"'T is like an ill dream!"

"And so strong, Martin."

"True, 't is the only merit the things possess; they are like stone — watch now!" And here, to prove my words, I let one drop, though indeed I chose a soft place for it.

"And they will be so easy to carry with these handles,

and — why, what have you there?" Saying which she set down the pot, gently as it had been an eggshell, and came to me; whereupon I showed her my posy, and I more fool-like than ever.

"I chanced to — see them growing," said I, "and thought — your birthday — they might pleasure you a little, mayhap — "

"Please me?" said she, taking them. "Please me! Oh, the dear, beautiful things, I love them!" And she buried her face among them. "'Twas kind of you to bring them for me, Martin!" said she, her face hidden in the flowers. "Indeed, you are very good to me! After all, you are that same dear Martin I knew long ago, that boy who used to brandish his rusty sword and vow he 'd suffer no evil to come near me and yearned for ogres and dragons to fight and slay on my behalf. And one day you caught a boy pulling my hair."

"It was very long hair even then!"

"And he made your lip bleed, Martin."

"And I hit him on the nose!"

"And he ran away, Martin."

"And you bathed my lip in the pool and afterwards you — you — "

"Yes, I did, Martin. Though 't is a long time to remember."

"I — shall never forget!" said I. "Shall you?"

Here she buried her face in her flowers again.

"As to the pots, there are four quite unbroken; will you help me bear them to our refuge? Breakfast will be ready."

"Breakfast is a sweet word!" quoth I. "And as to these things, if you will have them, well and good!"

And thus, she with her flowers and I with the gallipots, we came to our habitation.

"What do we work at to-day?" she questioned, as we rose from our morning meal.

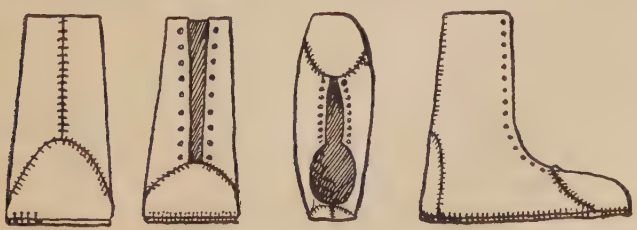
"To-day I make you a pair of shoes."

"How may I aid you, Martin?"

"In a thousand ways," and I plucked a great fan-

shaped leaf that grew adjacent. "First, sit you down! And now give me your foot!" So, kneeling before her, I traced out the shape of her foot upon the leaf and got no further for a while, so that presently she went about her household duties, leaving me staring at my leaf and scratching my head, puzzling out how I must cut and shape my goatskin. Well-nigh all that morning I sat scheming and studying how best I might achieve my purpose and the end of it was this:

This shape I cut from the leaf and with it went to find my lady; then, she sitting upon the stool, I took off one of her shoes (and she all laughing wonderment) and, fitting this pattern to her foot, found it well enough for shape though something too large. I now took the goatskin and laying it on the table cut therefrom a piece to my pattern; then with one of my nails ground to a sharp point like a cobbler's awl, I pierced it with holes and sewed it together with gut in this fashion:



This is quickly over in the telling but it was long a-doing so that having wrought steadily all through the day, night was at hand ere her shoes were completed with three thicknesses of hide for soles and all sewed mighty secure.

Now though they were not things of beauty (as may plainly be seen from my drawing herewith) yet, once I had laced them snug upon her feet, they (shaping and moulding themselves to her slender ankles and dainty feet) were none so ill-looking, after all. And now she, walking to and fro in them, must needs admire at their construction and the comfort of them and very lavish in her praise of them and me; the which did pleasure me mightily, though I took pains to hide it.

"Why, Martin," said she, thrusting out a foot and wagging it to and fro (very taking to behold), "I vow our cobbler surpasseth our carpenter! Dian's buskins were no better, nay, not so good, judging by pictures I have seen."

"They will at least keep out any thorns," said I, "though as to looks—"

"They look what they are, Martin, the shoes of a huntress. You shall find her very swift and sure-footed when her bruises are quite gone."

"I'm glad they please you," said I, yet upon my knees and stooping to view them 'neath her petticoat, "though now I see I might better them by trimming and shaping them here and there."

"No, no, Martin, leave well alone."

But now and all at once I started to feel a great splash of rain upon my cheek and, glancing up, saw the sky all overcast, while seaward the whole horizon was very black and ominous with great masses of writhing vapour and these threatening clouds lit ever and anon by a reddish glow and pierced by vivid lightning flashes. All of which took us mightily by surprise, we having been too intent upon these new buskins to heed aught else.

"Yonder is storm and tempest," said I; "see how it

sweeps towards us!" And I pointed where, far across the dark sea, a line of foam marked the oncoming fury of the wind. And presently we heard it, a faint hum, growing ever louder and fiercer.

"Oh, Martin, see yonder!" and she pointed to the onrushing of the foaming waters. "'T is very awful but very grand!"

"Let us go in!" said I, catching up my tools. "Come, soon will be roaring havoc all about us!"

"Nay, let us stay awhile and watch — "

As she spoke it seemed as the sea gathered itself into one great and mighty wave, a huge wall of foaming waters that rolled onward, hissing and roaring as it would 'whelm the very island beneath it. On it rushed, swelling ever higher, and so burst in thunder upon the barrier reef, filling the air with whirling foam. And then — then came the wind — a screaming, howling, vicious titan that hurled us flat and pinned me breathless and scarce able to move; howbeit I crawled where she crouched somewhat sheltered by a rock and, clasping her within my arm, lay there nor dared to stir until the mad fury of the wind abated somewhat. Then side by side on hands and knees we gained our rocky fastness and, closing the door, which was screened from the direct force of the tempest, I barred it with the beam I had made for the purpose and so stood staring at my companion and she on me, while all the world about us roared and clamoured loud and louder until it seemed here was to be an end of all things. And now suddenly came darkness; and in this darkness her hand found mine and nestled there. Thus we remained a great while, hearkening to the awful booming of this rushing, mighty wind, a sound indescribable in itself yet one to shake the very soul. In a while, the tumult subsiding a little, we might distinguish other sounds as: the rolling of thunder, the rending crash of falling trees hard by and the roar of mighty waters. And presently her voice came to me:

"God pity all poor mariners, Martin!"

"Amen!" said I and needs must think of Adam and Godby and wonder where they might be.

"'T is very dark, shall we not have a light?" she questioned.

"If I can find our lamp," says I, groping about for it.

"Here is a candle!"

"A candle," said I—"and where should we find a candle?"

"We have three, Martin; I made them with tallow from our goat, though they are poor things, I fear."

Taking out my tinder-box I very soon had these candles burning, and though they smoked somewhat, a very excellent light we thought them. "And now for supper!" said she, beginning to bustle about. "Our meat is in the larder, Martin." Now this larder was our third and smallest cave and going therein I was immediately struck by the coldness of it; moreover the flame of the candle I bore flickered as in a draught of air, insomuch that, forgetting the meat, I began searching high and low, looking for some crack or crevice whence this draught issued, yet found none. This set me to wondering; for here was the cave some ten feet by twelve or more and set deep within the living rock, the walls smoothed off, here and there, as by hand, but with never a crack or fissure in roof or walls so far as I might discover. Yet was I conscious of this cold breath of air so that my puzzlement grew the greater.

Presently as I stood thus staring about, to me came my lady.

"Good lack, Martin," said she, "if we sup on goat tonight we must eat it raw, for we have no fire!"

"Fire!" said I. "Hum! Smoke would do it; 't is an excellent thought."

"Do what, Martin?"

"Look at the candle flame and hark!"

And now, the booming of the wind dying down somewhat, we heard a strange and dismal wailing and therewith a sound of water afar.

"Oh, Martin!" she whispered, clasping her hands and coming nearer to me, "what is it?"

"Nought to fear, comrade. But somewhere in this larder of ours is an opening or fissure; the question is — where? And this I go to find out."

"Aye, but how?" she questioned, coming nearer yet, for now the wailing had sunk to a groan, and this gave place to a bubbling gasp mighty unpleasant to hear.

"With smoke," said I, setting the candle in a niche of rock; "I will light a fire here."

"But we have no fuel, Martin."

"There is plenty in my bed."

"But how will you sleep and no bed?"

"Well enough, as I have done many a time and oft!"

"But, oh, Martin; 't will make such dire mess and this our larder!"

"No matter; I'll clean it up. Howbeit I must learn whence cometh this cold-breathing air. Besides, the fire shall cook our supper and moreover — "

But here I checked speaking all at once for, above the dismal groans and wailing, I had heard a sudden fierce whispering:

"Oh, Martin," sighed my companion. "We are not alone; somewhere there are people whispering! Did you hear, Martin, oh, did you hear?" And I felt her all of a tremble where she leaned against me.

"'T is gone now!" said I, speaking under my breath.

"But 't was there, Martin — a hateful whispering."

"Aye, I heard it," said I, fierce and loud; "and I 'll find out who or what — "

"Who or what — !" hissed a soft voice. Hereupon I sheathed the knife I had drawn and laughed, and immediately there came another laugh, though this one very soft.

"Ahoy!" I shouted, and presently back came the answer "Ahoy!" and then again, though much fainter, "Ahoy!" "'T is nought but an echo," I laughed (yet mighty relieved all the same).

"Thank God!" said she faintly, and would have fallen but for my arm.

"Why, comrade, how now!" said I; and for a moment her soft cheek rested against my leathern jerkin.

"Oh, Martin," she sighed, "I do fear me I 'm a monstrous craven — sometimes! Forgive me!"

"Forgive you?" and, looking down on her bowed head, feeling her thus all a-tremble against me, I fell a-stammering. "Forgive you, nay — where — here was an unchancy thing — 't is small wonder — no wonder you should grow affrighted and tremble a little — "

"You are trembling also," said she, her voice muffled against me.

"Am I?"

"Yes, Martin. Were you afraid likewise?"

"No — yes!" said I and, feeling her stir in my hold, I loosed her.

And now, bringing fern and bracken from my bed, I kindled a fire and, damping this a little, made a smoke the which, rising to a certain height, blew back upon us but always from the one direction; and peering up thither I judged here must be a space 'twixt the roof and the face of the rock, though marvellous well-hid from all observation. Hereupon, the place being full of smoke, I must needs stamp out the fire lest we stifle; yet I had discovered what I sought. So whiles my companion busied herself about supper, I dragged our table from the outer cave and, sitting in a certain corner, mounted thereon, reached up and grasped a ledge of rock by which I drew myself up and found I was in a narrow opening or tunnel and so low that I must creep on hands and knees.

"Will you have a candle, Martin?" And there was my lady standing below me on the table, all anxious-eyed. So I took the candle and, creeping through this narrow passage, suddenly found myself in another cavern very spacious and lofty; and now, standing in this place, I stared about me very full of wonder, as well I might be, for I saw this: Before me a narrow door, very stout and

pierced with a loophole, and beyond this a rocky passage that led steeply down; on my right hand, in a corner, a rough bed with a herd of goatskins and sheets that looked like sailcloth; on my left a table and armchair rough-builded like the bed, and above these, a row of shelves against the rocky wall whereon stood three pipkins, an iron, three-legged cooking-pot, a candlestick and an inkhorn with pen in it. Lastly, in a corner close beside the bed, I spied a long-barrelled firelock with bandoliers complete. I was about to reach this (and very joyously) when my lady's voice arrested me.

"Martin, are you there? Are you safe?"

"Indeed!" answered I, "And Damaris, I have found you treasure beyond price."

"Oh, Martin, is it Bartlemy's treasure — the jewels?"

"Better than that a thousand times; I have found you a real cooking-pot!"

"Oh, wonderful! Show me! Nay, let me see for myself. Come and aid me up, Martin."

Setting down my candle, I crawled back where she stood all eager impatience and, clasping her hands in mine, drew her up and on hands and knees brought her into the cave.

"Here's a goodly place, comrade!" said I.

"Yes, Martin."

"With a ladder to come and go by, this should make you a noble bedchamber."

"Never!" said she. "Oh, never!"

"And wherefore not?"

"First because I like my little cave best, and second because this is too much like a dungeon, and third because I like it not — and hark!" and indeed as we spoke the echoes hissed and whispered all about us.

"Why, 't is airy and very dry!"

"And very dark by day, Martin."

"True enough! Still, 't is a wondrous place — "

"Oh, very, Martin, only I like it not at all."

"Why then the bed, the bed should serve you well."

"No!" said she, mighty vehement. "You shall make me a better an you will, or I will do with my bed of fern."

"Well, then, this pot — here is noble iron pot for you, at least!"

"Why, yes," said she, smiling to see me all chapfallen; "'t is indeed a very good pot; let us bring it away with us, though indeed I could do very well without it."

"Lord!" said I gloomily. "Here have I found you all these goodly things, not to mention chair and table, thinking to please you and instead — "

"I know, Martin, forgive me, but I love not the place nor anything in it. I am very foolish belike, but so it is." And here she must needs shiver. "As to these things — the bed, the chair and table and the shelves yonder — why, you can contrive better than they in time, Martin; and by your thought and labour they will be doubly ours, made by you for our two selves and used by none but us."

"True," said I, greatly mollified. "But this pot now; I can never make you so brave a pot as this."

"Why, very well, Martin," said she, smiling at my earnestness, "bring it and let us begone." So I reached down the pot and espied therein a long-barrelled pistol; whipping it out, I blew off the dust and saw 't was primed and loaded with flint in place, albeit very rusty. I was yet staring at this when my lady gave a little soft cry of pleasure and came to me with somewhat hidden behind her.

"Martin," said she, "'t is a good place after all, for see — see what it hath given you!" And she showed me that which I had yearned for so bitterly, viz: a good, stout saw. Tossing aside the pistol, I took it eagerly enough and, though it was rusty, a very serviceable tool I found it to be.

"Ha, comrade!" said I, "now shall you have a chair with arms, a cupboard, and a bed fit to lie on; here is all the furniture you may want!"

"And now," said she, "let us begone, if you would have

your supper, Martin." So I followed her through the little tunnel and, having lowered her on to the table, gave her the pot and then (albeit she was mighty unwilling) turned back, minded to bring away the firelock and pistol and any such odds and ends as might serve me.

Reaching the cave, I heard again the dismal groans and wailing but much louder than before and, coming to the door, saw it opened on a steep declivity of rock wherein were rough steps or rather notches that yet gave good foothold. So I began to descend this narrow way, my candle before me and taking vast heed to my feet, but as I got lower the rock grew moist and slimy, so that I was half minded to turn back; but having come thus far, determined to see where it might bring me, for now, from the glooms below, I could hear the soft lapping of water. Then all at once I stopped and stood shivering (as well I might) for immediately beneath me I saw a narrow ledge of rock and beyond this a pit, black and noisome and full of sluggish water.

For a long while (as it seemed) I stared down into this water scarce daring to move lest I plunge into this dreadful abyss where the black water, lapping sluggishly, made stealthy, menacing noises very evil to hear. At last I turned about (and mighty careful) and so made my ways up and out of this unhallowed place more painfully than I had come. Reaching the cave at last (and very thankful), I sought to close the door but found it to resist my efforts. This but made me the more determined to shut out this evil place with its cold-breathing air, and I began to examine this door to discover the reason of its immobility. Now this (as I have said) was a narrow door and set betwixt jambs and with lintel above very strong and excellent well contrived; but as I lifted my candle to view it better, I stopped all at once to stare up at a something fixed midway in this lintel, a strange, shrivelled black thing very like to a great spider with writhen legs updrawn; and now, peering closer, I saw this was a human hand hacked off midway 'twixt wrist

and elbow and skewered to the lintel by a great nail. And as I stood staring up at this evil thing, from somewhere in the black void beyond the door rose a long, agonised wailing that rose to a bubbling shriek; and though I knew this for no more than some trick of the wind, I felt my flesh tingle to sudden chill. Howbeit, I lifted my candle higher yet and thus saw beneath this shrivelled, claw-like hand a parchment nailed very precisely at its four corners, though black with dust. Wiping this dust away, I read these words very fair writ in bold, clear characters.

James Ballantyne
His hand
Wherewith he foully murdered a good
man.
This hand cut off by me this June 23 — 1642.
The same Ballantyne having perished suddenly by a pistol shot
According to my oath.
Like rogues — take warning
ADAM PENFEATHER.

In a while I turned from this hateful thing and, coming to the bed, began to examine the huddle of goatskins and though full of dust and something stiff, found them little the worse for their long disuse; the same applied equally to the sailcloth, the which though yellow was still strong and serviceable. Reaching the firelock from the corner I found it to be furnished with a snaphance or flintlock and, though very rusty, methought, cleaned and oiled, it might make me a very good weapon had I but powder and shot. But the bandoliers held in all but two poor charges, which powder I determined to keep for the pistol. Therefore I set the musket back in the corner and doing so espied a book that lay open and face down beneath the bedstead. Taking it up I wiped off the dust and, opening this book at the first page, I came on this:

Adam Penfeather.
Hys Journal
1642.

Hereupon, perceiving in it many charts and maps, together with a plan of the island very well drawn, I thrust it into my bosom and, hearing my lady calling me, took pistol and bandolier and so to supper.

Thus, 'midst howling storm and tempest, we sat down side by side to sup, very silent for the most part by reason of this elemental strife that raged about our habitation, filling the world with awful stir and clamour.

But in a while seeing her so downcast and with head a-droop I must needs fall gloomy also and full of a growing bitterness.

"Art grieving for England?" said I at last. "Yearning for home and friends and some man belike that loves and is beloved again!"

"And why not, Martin?"

"Because 't is vain."

"And yet 't would be but natural."

"Aye, indeed," said I gloomily and forgetting my supper, "for contrasting all you have lost — home and friends and love — with your present evil plight here in this howling wilderness, 't is small wonder you weep."

"But I am not weeping!" said she, flushing.

"Yet you well may," quoth I, "for here are you at the world's end and with none but myself for company."

"Why, truly, here is good cause for tears!" said she, flashing her eyes at me.

"Aye!" I nodded. "'T is pity Fate hath chosen you so ill a companion."

"Indeed, and so it is!" and turns her back on me. And so we sat awhile, she with her back to me and I gloomy and despondent, hearkening to the howling of the wind.

"You eat no supper!" said I at last.

"Neither do you!"

"I am not hungry!"

"Nor I!"

Myself. (Speaking after some while, humbly) Have I angered you?

She. Mightily!

Myself. Aye, but how?

She. By your idle, foolish talk, for if I grow thoughtful sometimes, why must you ever dream me repining against my lot? To-night, hearkening to this dreadful tempest, I was full of gratitude to God that he had brought us to this safe harbourage and set me in your companionship. And if my heart cry out for England sometimes 't is because I do love England. Yet my days here are too full of labour for vain grieving and my labour, like my sleep, is joy to me. And there is no man I love in England — or anywhere else.

Myself. (And more humbly than ever) Why, then, I pray you forgive me, comrade.

At this she looked at me over her shoulder, frowning and a little askance.

"For, indeed," said I, meeting this look, "I would have you know me ever as your comrade to serve you faithfully, seeking only your friendship and nought beyond; one you may trust unfearing despite my ungentle ways."

And now I saw her frown was vanished quite, her eyes grown wondrous gentle and her lips curving to a smile; and so she reached out her hand to me.

And thus we two poor, desolate souls found great solace and comfort in each other's companionship and, hearkening to the roar of this mighty tempest, felt the bonds of our comradeship only strengthened thereby.

When my lady was gone to bed I, remembering Adam's journal, took it out and drawing the candle nearer fell to examining the book more closely. It was a smallish volume but very thick, and with very many close-written pages, its stout leathern covers battered and stained, and an ill-looking thing I thought it. But opening it haphazard, I forgot all save the words I read, these written in Adam's small, clerkly hand, for I came on this:

May 10. Glory be and thanks unto that Providence hath been my salvation and poured upon unworthy me His blessing

in that I this day have fought and killed this murderous rogue and detestable pirate Roger Tressady.

Here followed divers accounts of his labours, his discovery of these caves and many cunning devices day by day until I came on this:

May 28. To-day a storm-beat pinnace standing in for my island and in it Abnegation Mings and divers others of Bartlemy's rogues, survivors (as I judge) of that cursed ship "Lady's Delight." They landed, being fifteen in all and I in great fear and distress therefore. They leaving their boat unwatched I stole thither and to my great joy found therein a watch-coat and bonnet, 3 muskets, 2 swords, 5 pistols with powder and shot, all of which I did hide among the rocks adjacent (a cunning hiding place) where I may fetch them at my leisure, Providence aiding.

May 29. This day 1 hour before dawn secured arms, powder, &c. and very grateful therefore.

May 30. To-day set about strengthening and fortifying my door since though Roger Tressady is dead there be other rogues yet to slay, their evil minds being full of lust for Black Bartlemy's Treasure and my blood. And these their names:

A true list of these rogues each and every known to me aforetime in Tortuga, viz:

My enemies.	*My equipment against these same.*
Abnegation Mings (Mate of the Vengeance Galley)	A determined mind.
Benjamin Galbally	3 Musquets with powder and shot a-plenty.
Jasper Vokes	2 Swords.
Juliano Bartolozzi	1 Axe.
Benjamin Denton	2 Pikes.
Pierre Durand	5 Pistols.
John Ford	A chain-shirt.
James Ballantyne	
Izaac Pym	
Robert Ball	
William Loveday	
Daniel Marston	
Ebeneezer Phips	
A boy and one woman.	

June 1. This day, waked by a shot and the sounds of lewd brawling, I to my look-out and mighty alarmed. Upon the sands a fire and thereby a woman and 6 or 7 of these rogues fighting for her. She, poor soul, running to escape, falls shot and they to furious fight. But my hopes of their destroying each other and saving me this labour vain by reason of Abnegation Mings bringing them to accord. Thereafter they to drinking and singing of this lewd piratical rant of theirs. Whereupon I tried a shot at them with my long-barrelled arquebus to no purpose. Have made me some ink and do answer very well.

June 2. Went a-hunting three of my destroyers, viz: the rogues Galbally, Vokes and Bartalozzi. But they well-armed and keeping always in company did no more than harm Vokes in the leg by a bullet and so to my fort and mighty downcast. Began to make myself a chair with arms. This day also wrote me out divers parchments thus:

Jasper Vokes
Slain of necessity this [day]
Like Rogues take warning
ADAM PENFEATHER.

and of these parchments 13 (the boy being already dead) with every rogue his name fair writ that they might know me for man of my word and leave me and my treasure in peace.

June 3. The weather hot and I out after my blood-thirsty enemies. Came on the French rogue Durand and him sleeping. Removed his fire-arms and kicked him awake. He to his sword and I to mine. Took him in quarte at the third passado through the right eye. A shrewd thrust. Tied a parchment about his neck and so to my refuge very full of gratitude.

June 4. To-day, guided by Providence, surprized Izaac Pym gorging himself on wild grapes. Spying me he whips out his pistol. But I fired first. Tied a parchment about his neck and so left him.

June 5. Evil days for me since these murderous rogues keep ever together now and on their watch against me day and night. My great chair finished and all I could wish it.

June 9. This night the moon full they assaulted my fort with huge halloo and many shot, battering my door with a

great log for ram. But I shooting one and wounding others, they left me in peace.

June 10. All this day ventured not abroad fearing an ambuscado. And lighting a fire within my inner cave the smoke showed me how I might hide from my bloodthirsty foes an need be.

June 11. My would-be slayers camped all about my refuge and howling for my blood though keeping them out of my line of fire. So I to making me a ladder of ropes whereby to come at my new-found sanctuary.

Determine to make this my bed-chamber.

June 12. My cruel enemies yet raging about me ravening for my blood and I very fearful. Have taken down my bed to set it within my secret chamber.

June 13. This morning early the rogue Benjamin Denton venturing within my fire-zone took a bullet in his midriff whereof he suddenly perished.

June 14. This morning having gotten all my furniture into my secret chamber do find myself very comfortable. But my stores beginning to run low do put myself on half-rations.

June 15. My murderers very silent with intent to lure me to my death but I . . .

The rest of this page was so stained and blotted that I could make nothing of it save a word or phrase here and there as: . . . secret pass . . . pit of black water and very . . . fear of death . . . head over ears . . . to my chin so that I . . . miserably wet . . . on hands and knees being determined . . . wonderful beyond thought for here . . . tlemy's Treasure . . . very great . . . this gold I saw was . . . emeralds, diamonds and . . . pearls a-many . . . through my fingers . . . like any poor crazed soul. For here was treasure greater . . . moreover and wealth undreamed . . . shaft of . . . suddenly . . . the valley. . . . sore annoyed I stood to . . . he knelt . . . seeking the water . . . turned . . . our knives . . . through my forearm but I . . . broke short against my chain-shirt and I . . . beneath the arm-pit. So back by the secret way to bind up my hurt and behold again my treasure.

Here my candle dying out and I in the dark, I laid the book aside and presently got me to sleep.

CHAPTER XXVII

We Explore the Island

I opened my eyes to a great beam of sun pouring in at the open doorway, whereby I judged my companion already astir. So I arose forthwith and, going out of the cave, stood amazed to see the havoc wrought by last night's storm. For everywhere lay trees torn and uprooted, and in divers of the more exposed places the wind it seemed had swept them utterly away, so that the landscape here and there wore an air unfamiliar and not to be recognised. Though the wind was died away, I saw the sea yet rolling tempestuous to break in foam upon the reef and with dreadful roar. Looking down on Deliverance Beach, I beheld its white sands littered with piles of driftwood and over all a cloudless blue with the sun new-risen and very hot.

And now, taking my hooks and line and a pliant bough for rod, I went forth to angle for breakfast. Reaching the lagoon, great wonder was it to behold these waters so smooth and placid while the surf foamed and blundered beyond the reef. I now baited my hooks with fat of the goat and betook me to my angling; nor had I long to wait ere I felt a jerk on my line and, tingling with the joy of it, I whipped my rod so furiously that my fish whirled glittering through the air and flying from my hook lay floundering on the sands behind me; and though of no great size yet a very good fish I thought him. And indeed I found the fish to bite readily enough and mighty dexterous to filch my bait, and though I lost a-many yet I, becoming more expert, contrived to land five likely fish of different sizes and of marvellous colouring.

So there sat I in the shade of a rock, mighty content

and quite lost in the joy of my sport until, chancing to lift my gaze, I beheld my companion upon the rocks over against me, gazing away across the troubled ocean. And beholding all the grace of her as she stood thus, her shapely figure poised and outlined against the blue sky, her long hair rippling in the soft wind, I clean forgot my fish, for indeed it seemed I had not noticed the vigorous beauty of her until now. And in this moment, as I sat staring up at her, she turned and spying me, waved her hand in cheery greeting and began to descend these rocks, leaping sure-footed from ledge to ledge, lithe and graceful as any fabled nymph or goddess of them all. But I, well knowing the danger of these rocks, watched her with breath in check and mighty anxious until she sprang nimbly to the sands and so came running all joyous to meet me. Hereupon I caught up my forgotten angle and found my hook empty, whereat she must needs fall a-laughing at my discomfiture.

"Oh, Martin," says she, "what a glory of sun and sea and sky and the wind so sweet! Indeed it seems as Nature would make us amends for the cruel storm, for the poor trees have suffered greatly."

"Aye, comrade," quoth I, "so is there much fruit for us to gather ere it rot, and great store of palm nuts which are good food and useful in a thousand ways."

"But Nature is very cruel, Martin, for I have seen many birds lying dead and over yonder a poor goat crushed by a tree."

"Why, then, these we will eat also, at least, such as we may."

"Nay, Martin, your mind runneth overmuch on food, methinks."

"Mayhap!" said I. "Howbeit, here are fish to our breakfast!" Hereupon she falls on her knees to behold my catch and very full of wonder.

"Indeed," said she, "meseemeth we have strayed into Paradise, for even the fish are beautiful. Why stare you so, Martin; is it so wonderful I joy in life and find it

sweet in so fair a world and on such a day? Moreover I have been swimming—"

"How," said I, "and the sea so rough!"

"I have found me a little bay where the waters run smooth and deep. But come, let us breakfast, for to-day, Martin, to-day we will explore our island."

"Why, I had thought to try my saw to-day," said I. "I had intended to begin a chair for you—"

"Nay, let this rest awhile, Martin; to-day I yearn to adventure the unknown. Who can say what marvels and wonders lie waiting us."

"As you will!" said I, rising, and so away to the plateau.

Now, very soon I had the fire a-going, and while she bustled to and fro preparing breakfast and singing very sweet and blithe to hear, I took the pistol and, having cleaned and oiled it, found it very well; then I loaded it with one of my six bullets, using a strip from my ragged shirt sleeve for wads. This done, I laid it by and, going for Adam's journal, I cut therefrom the map of the island and fell to studying it with a view to our forthcoming journey. The which map I give herewith:

Hearing my companion call me, I went out to find breakfast ready, the fish broiled and very appetising. While we ate I showed her Adam's map and she greatly pleased therewith and anxious to know how I came by it, all of which I told her. And she, examining this plan, grew but the more eager to be gone on this expedition.

"But, Martin," said she all at once, as she studied the map. "Master Penfeather would seem to have been forced to slay a great number of poor men; here be—one—two—three— Oh, many men all dead by his hand—and each marked with a little cross."

"Aye," I nodded, "and each and every 'slain of necessity.'"

"Which meaneth—what, Martin?"

"Murder, like as not, though 't is all cunningly glozed in his journal."

"I would fain see this journal, Martin."

"Why, so you shall and judge thereby whether he be rogue or no, for 't is beyond me."

"But now," said she, rising, "let us make ready for our

journey, though 't will be no great matter, for according to this plan the island is no more than seven miles long and some five miles wide."

"Even so," quoth I, "'t will be ill travelling by reason

of woods and tangled thickets, swamps and the like, so I judge 't will take the whole day."

"Why, then," said she, leaping up, "the sooner we start the better, Martin."

Hereupon, finding her so set on it, I proceeded to equip myself for the journey; in my belt I thrust my trusty knife and the hatchet, these balanced by the pistol, and over my shoulders I slung my bow and quiver of arrows and chose me a good stout sapling for staff. Soon cometh my companion, her slender middle girt by a goatskin girdle whereto she had hung our other sheath knife and my wallet; so we set out together, side by side. Reaching the little valley, we turned off to the right, or westerly, according to Adam's map, following the stream that rippled amid great boulders or flowed 'twixt banks adorned with many hued flowers most rare to be seen. And here were bushes of all kinds and trees a-plenty untouched by the gale, for the little valley, being well secluded, it fortuned the wind had passed it over. Up rose the sun, waxing ever hotter, so that, reaching a grove of trees, I would have my companion rest awhile in this right pleasant shade the whiles I, with certain great leaves, contrived a covering for her head and another for my own; which done, we fared on again, and she very merry by reason of the strange figures we cut. Thus we presently came out of the valley into a pleasant champaign, a rolling, grassy upland with dim woods beyond, even as Adam had set forth in his map. Wherefore guided by this map we struck off north and so in a while came again to the river and heard the roar of the waterfall away to our left; and, turning thither (I being minded to show her this wonder), we saw before us a high land, well girt about by bush and fern and flowering shrubs, up which we scrambled forthwith, the roar of the fall waxing louder as we climbed. Reaching the summit, we saw it had once been covered by noble trees, some few of which the storm had left standing yet, but for the most part they lay wind-tossed in wild and tangled confusion.

"Oh, Martin!" said my companion. And so stood awed by the destruction wrought by this mighty and pitiless tempest. Here was ill going but by dint of labour with my hatchet I forced us a way through the wreckage until we suddenly came where we might behold the fall that leapt from the adjacent rocks, all rainbow-hued, to plunge into those deep and troubled waters below.

And now, instead of bursting forth into cries of delighted wonder, as I had expected, my companion stood mute and still, her hands tight-clasped, viewing now the splendour of these falling waters, now the foam-sprent deeps below, like one quite dumbfounded. At last,

"Oh, Martin," says she in my ear, for the noise of the fall was very loud, "here is wonder on wonder!"

"As how, comrade?"

"This great body of water, for all its weight, yet disturbeth yonder black depths very little — and how should this chance except this dark lake be immeasurably deep?"

"Aye, true!" said I. "Here belike was a volcano once and this the crater."

Hard by, a great rock jutted out above the lake, that same barren rock whereon I had sat the day I discovered this cataract; now as I viewed this rock I was struck by its grotesque shape and then, all at once, I saw it was hatefully like to a shrivelled head; there were the fleshless jaws, the shrunken nose and great, hollow eye socket. And now, even as I stared at the thing, my companion spied it also, for I felt her hand on my arm and saw her stand to view it wide-eyed. So we, speaking no word, stared upon this shape, and ever as we stared the nameless evil of it seemed to grow, insomuch that we turned with one accord and hasted away.

"Yonder was an ill sight, Martin."

"Indeed!" said I. "'Twas like the face of one long dead! And yet 'tis no more than a volcanic rock! Nature playeth strange tricks sometimes, and here was one vastly strange and most unlovely!" After this we went on side by side and never a word betwixt us until we had

reached that pleasant champaign country where flowed the river shaded by goodly trees in whose branches fluttered birds of a plumage marvellously coloured and diverse, and beneath which bloomed flowers as vivid; insomuch that my lady brake forth ever and anon into little soft cries of delighted wonder. And yet, despite all these marvels, it was long ere we shook off the evil of that ghastly rock.

Presently as we journeyed came a wind sweet and fresh from the sea, offsetting the sun's immoderate heat to our great comfort, so that, though ofttimes our way was toilsome, our spirits rose notwithstanding, and we laughed and talked unfeignedly as only good comrades may.

By noon we had reached a place of rocks where, according to Adam's map, should be a ford, though hereabouts the stream, swollen by the late rains, ran deep. Howbeit, we presently came upon the ford sure enough and, having crossed it, my lady must needs fall to admiring at her new shoes again, finding them water-fast.

"And they so comfortable and easy to go in, Martin!"

"Why, you have footed it bravely thus far!" said I. "But—"

"But?" said she. "And what then? You shall find me no laggard these days, Martin. Indeed I could run fast as you, for all your long legs, sir."

So she challenged me to race her forthwith, whereupon (and despite the sun) we started off side by side and she so fleet that I might scarce keep pace with her; thus we ran until at last we stopped, all flushed and breathless and laughing for the pure joy of it.

Presently in our going we came on a little dell, very shady and pleasantly secluded, where flowers bloomed and great clusters of wild grapes hung ripe for the plucking; and mighty pleasant methought it to behold my companion's pleased wonderment. Here we sat to rest and found these grapes very sweet and refreshing.

Much might I tell of the marvels of this island, of fruit and bird and beast, of the great butterflies that wheeled and hovered resplendent and of the many and divers

wonders that beset us at every turn; but lest my narrative grow to immoderate length (of the which I do already begin to entertain some doubt), I will pass these with this mere mention and hurry on to say that we tramped blithely on until, the sun declining westwards, warned us to be turning back; but close before us rose that high hill whose summit towered above the island, and my companion mighty determined that she must climb it.

"For Martin," said she, scornful of all weariness, "once up there we may behold all our domain spread out before us!"

So having skirted the woods and avoided tangled thickets as well as we might, we began the ascent, which we found to be no great matter after all. And now I bethought me how Adam had sped hot-foot up hereabouts on a time and with Tressady's glittering hook ringing loud on the rocks behind him. More than once as we climbed we came on flocks of goats that scampered off at sight of us; here, too, I remarked divers great birds and determined to try a shot at one if chance should offer. As to my companion, I had all I could do to keep up with her until, flushed and breathless, she turned to view me all radiant-eyed where we stood panting upon the summit. And now, beholding the prospect below, she uttered a soft, inarticulate cry and, sinking down upon the sward, pushed the damp curls from her brow the better to survey the scene outstretched before us.

A rolling, wooded country of broad savannahs, of stately groves and many boskages, of dim woods and flashing streams; a blended harmony of greens besplashed, here and there, with blossoming thickets or flowering trees, the whole shut in by towering, tree-girt cliffs and bounded by a limitless ocean, blue as any sapphire.

Viewing the island from this eminence, I could see that Adam's map was true in all essentials as to shape and general trend of the country and, sitting beside my lady, I fell to viewing the island more narrowly, especially this eminent place; and, looking about me, I called to mind how

Adam (according to his story) had waged desperate fight with Tressady hereabouts — indeed, I thought to recognise the very spot itself; viz: a narrow ledge of rock with, far below, a sea that ran deeply blue to break in foam against the base of these precipitous cliffs. Away over hill and dale I saw that greeny cliff with its silver thread of falling water that marked our refuge, and beyond this again, on my right hand, the white spume of the breakers on the reef. And beholding the beauties thus spread out before my eyes and knowing myself undisputed lord of it all, there grew within me a sense of joy unknown hitherto.

At last, moved by a sudden thought, I turned from the beauties of this our island to study the beauty of her who sat beside me; the proud carriage of her shapely head 'neath its silky masses of hair, the level brows, the calm, deep serenity of her blue eyes, the delicate nose, full red lips and dimpled chin, the soft round column of her throat, deep bosom and slender waist, — thus sat I staring upon her loveliness, heedless of all else until she stirred uneasily, as if conscious of my regard, and looked at me. Then I saw that her eyes were serene no longer, whiles all at once throat and cheeks and brow were suffused with slow and painful colour, yet even as I gazed on her she met my look unflinching.

"What is it, Martin?" she questioned, a little breathless still.

"Suppose," said I slowly, "suppose we are never taken hence; suppose we are destined to end our days here?"

"Surely this is — an ill thought, Martin?"

"Indeed, and is it, my lady? Can the world offer a home more fair?"

"Surely not, Martin."

"Then wherein lieth the ill — Damaris? Is it that you do yearn so mightily for England?"

"There lieth my home, Martin!"

"Is home then so dear to you?" Here, finding no answer, she grew troubled. "Or is it," said I, bending my

staff across my knee and beginning to frown, "or is it that there waits some man yonder that you love?"

"No, Martin, have I not told you —"

"Why, then, is it that you grow a-weary of my unlovely ways and would be quit of me?"

"No, Martin — only — only —" Here she fell silent, and I saw her flush again.

"Or is it that you fear I might grow to love you — in time?"

"To — love me!" said she very softly, and now I saw her red lips dimple to a smile as she stooped to cull a flower blooming hard by. "Nay!" said she lightly. "Here were a wonder beyond thought, Martin!"

"And wherefore should this be so great wonder?" I demanded.

"Because I am Joan Brandon and you are a man vowed and sworn to vengeance, Martin."

"Vengeance?" And, with the word, the staff snapped in my hands.

"Is it not so, Martin?" she questioned wistfully. "Given freedom from this island, would you not go seeking your enemy's life? Dream you not of vengeance still?"

"Aye, true," said I, "true! How should it be otherwise? Come, let us begone!" And casting away my broken staff, I got to my feet. But she, sitting there, lifted her head to view me with look mighty strange.

"Poor Martin!" said she softly. "Poor Martin!"

Then she arose, albeit slow and wearily, and we went down the hill together. Now as we went thus, I in black humour (and never a word), I espied one of those great birds I have mentioned within easy range and whipping off my bow I strung it and setting arrow on cord let fly and brought down my quarry to earth (as luck would have it), and running forward had very soon despatched it.

"Why must you kill the poor thing, Martin?"

"For supper."

"Supper waiteth us at home."

"Home?" said I.

"The cave, Martin."

"We shall not reach there this night. 'T will be dark in another hour and there is no moon, so needs must we bide here."

"As you will, Martin."

Hard beside the river, that wound a devious course through the green, was a little grove and, sitting here, I fell to plucking the bird.

"Shall I not do that, Martin?"

"I can do it well enough."

"As you wish, Martin."

"You are weary, doubtless."

"Why, 't is no great labour to cook supper, Martin."

"Howbeit, I 'll try my hand to-night."

"Very well." And away she went to collect sticks for the fire, whiles I sat feathering the bird and found the flesh of it very white and delicate. But all the while my anger swelled within me for the folly I had uttered to her in a moment of impulse concerning love.

Thus as she knelt beside me to build the fire I spoke my thought:

"I said a vain and foolish thing to you a while since."

"Aye, Martin, you did!" said she, bending over her pile of sticks. "But which do you mean?"

"I mean that folly regarding love."

"Oh, was that folly, Martin?" she questioned, busy laying the sticks in place.

"Arrant folly, for I could never love you — or any woman — "

"Why not, Martin?"

"Because I have no gift for 't — no leaning that way — nor ever shall — "

"Why, indeed, you are no ordinary man, Martin. Shall I light the fire?"

"No, I will."

"Yes, Martin!" And down she sat with folded hands, watching me mighty solemn and demure, and I very con-

scious of her scrutiny. Having plucked and drawn my bird, I fell to trimming it with my knife yet all the time feeling her gaze upon me so that what with this and my anger I pricked my thumb and cursed beneath my breath, whereupon she arose and left me.

Having thus prepared my bird for cooking, I set it upon two sticks and, lighting the fire, sat down to watch it. But scarce had I done so when back came my lady.

"Martin," said she, "should you not truss your bird first?"

"'T will do as it is."

"Very well, Martin. But why are you so short with me?"

"I am surly by nature!" quoth I.

"Aye, true!" she nodded. "But why are you angry with me this time?"

"I ha' forgot."

"You were merry enough this noon and laughed gaily and once you fell a-whistling—"

"The more fool I!"

"Why, then, methinks I do like your folly—sometimes!" said she softly. "But now see this river, Martin; 't is called the Serpent Water in the map, and indeed it winds and twists like any snake. But where should so much water come from, think you? Let us go look!"

"Nay, not I—here 's the bird to tend—"

"Why, then," said she, stamping her foot at me in sudden anger, "stay where you are until you find your temper! And may your bird burn to a cinder!" And away she went forthwith and I staring after her like any fool until she was out of sight. So there sat I beside the fire and giving all due heed to my cooking; but in a while I fell to deep reflection and became so lost in my thoughts that, roused by a smell of burning, I started up to find my bird woefully singed.

This put me in fine rage so that I was minded to cast the carcass into the fire and have done with it; and my anger grew as the time passed and my companion came

not. The sun sank rapidly, and the bird I judged was well-nigh done; wherefore I began to shout and halloo, bidding her to supper. But the shadows deepening, and getting no answer to my outcries, I started up, clean forgetting my cookery, and hasted off in search of my companion, calling her name now and then as I went. Following the stream I found it to narrow suddenly (and it running very furious and deep), perceiving which I began to fear lest some mischance had befallen my wilful lady. Presently, as I hurried on, casting my eyes here and there in search of her, I heard, above the rush of the water, a strange and intermittent roaring the which I could make nothing of, until, at last, forcing my way through the underbrush, I saw before me a column of water that spouted up into the air from a fissure at the base of the hill, and this waterspout was about the bigness of a fair-sized tree and gushed up some twenty feet or so, now sinking to half this height only to rise again. Scarce pausing to behold this wonder I would have hasted on (and roaring louder than the water) when I beheld her seated close by upon a rock and watching me, chin in hand.

"Why must you shout so loud!" said she reprovingly.

"I feared you lost!" answered I, like any fool.

"Would it matter so much? And you so angry with me and no reason?"

"Howbeit, supper is ready!"

"I am not hungry, I thank you, sir."

"But I am!"

"Then go eat!"

"Not alone!" says I; and then very humbly, "Prithee, comrade, come to supper; indeed, you should be hungry!"

"And, indeed, Martin," said she, rising and giving me her hand, "I do think I am vastly hungry after all." So back we went together and, reaching the fire, found the accursed bird burned black as any coal, whereupon I stood mighty downcast and abashed the while she laughed and laughed until she needs must lean against a tree; and I, seeing her thus merry at my expense, presently laughed

also. Hereupon she fell on her knees and, taking the thing from the fire, set it upon a great leaf for dish and turned it this way and that.

"Good lack, Martin!" said she. "'T is burned as black e'en as I wished! This cometh of your usurpation of my duties, sir! And yet methinks 't is not utterly spoiled!" And drawing her knife she scraped and trimmed it, cutting away the burned parts until there little enough remained, but that mighty delectable, judging by the smell of it.

So down we sat to supper forthwith and mighty amicable, nay, indeed, methought her kinder than ordinary and our friendship only the stronger, which did comfort me mightily.

But our supper done we spake little, for night was come upon us very still and dark, save for a glitter of stars by whose unearthly light all things took on strange shapes and our solitude seemed but the more profound and awesome.

Above us a purple sky be-gemmed by a myriad stars, a countless host whose distant splendour throbbed upon the night; round about us a gloom of woods and thickets that hemmed us in like a dark and sombre tide, whence stole a sweet air fraught with spicy odours; and over all a deep and brooding quietude. But little by little upon this silence crept sounds near and far, leafy rustlings, a stirring in the undergrowth, the whimper of some animal, the croak of a bird and the faint, never-ceasing murmur of the surge.

And I, gazing thus upon this measureless immensity, felt myself humbled thereby, and with this came a knowledge of the futility of my life hitherto. And now (as often she had done, ere this) my companion voiced the thought I had no words for.

"Martin," said she softly, "what pitiful things are we, lost thus in God's infinity."

"And doth it affright you, Damaris?"

"No, Martin, for God is all-merciful. Yet I needs must

think how vain our little strivings, our hopes and fears, how small our joys and sorrows!"

"Aye, truly, truly!" quoth I.

"But," said she, leaning towards me in the firelight and with her gaze uplift to the starry heavens, "He who made the heavens is a merciful God 'who hath made great lights — the moon and the stars to govern the night.' So, Martin, let us give thanks unto the Lord 'for He is good, for His mercy endureth forever'; and in this knowledge methinks we may surely rest secure."

After this we fell silent again, I for one being very full of troublesome thought and perplexity, and the sum of it this, viz: Whether a woman, cast alone on a desolate island with a man such as I, had need to fear him? To the which question answer found I none. Wherefore I got me another speculation, to wit: Whether a man and woman thus solitary must needs go a-falling in love with one another? Finding no answer to this either, I turned, half-minded to put the question to my companion, and found her fast asleep.

She lay deep-slumbering in the light of the fire, her face half hid 'neath a tress of shining hair; and I, viewing her, chin in fist, saw in her only the last of her hated race and knew in that moment that never might there be aught of true love, that pure passion, high and ennobling, the which may lift man above his baser self — never might this be 'twixt her blood and mine. And knowing this, I knew also great doubt and fear of myself. And in my fear I lifted my gaze to the stars, those "great lights" set there by the hand of God; and spake thus within myself:

"Lord God," quoth I, "since love is not nor ever shall be 'twixt this my companion and me, do Thou protect her from the devil within me; do Thou aid me to keep the oath I sware in Thy name."

But now (and my prayer scarce uttered) the Devil sprang and was upon me and I, forgetting all my oaths and resolutions, yielded me joyously to his will. Stirring in her slumbers, my lady sighed, turned and, throwing out

her arm, it chanced that her hand came upon my knee and rested there and I, shivering at her touch, seized this hand and caught it to my lips and began to kiss these helpless fingers and the round, soft arm above. I felt her start, heard her breath catch in a sob, but in my madness I swept her to my embrace. Then as I stooped, she held me off, striving fiercely against me; all at once her struggles ceased, and I heard her breath come in a long, tremulous sigh.

"Martin!" said she. "Oh, thank God 'tis you! I dreamed Black Bartlemy's cruel arms were about me, and I was sick with fear and horror — thank God 'tis you, dear Martin, and I safe from all harms soever. So hold me an you will, Martin, you that have saved me from so much and will do till the end."

"Aye, by God!" said I, bending my head above her that she might not see my face. "And so I will, faithfully, truly, until the very end!"

"Do I not know it! — Oh, do I not know it!" said she in choking voice, and here, lying beside me, she must take my hand and hold it to her soft cheek. "Indeed, I do think there is no man like you in the whole world."

At this, knowing myself so unworthy, I thought no man in the world so miserable as I, as I would have told her but dared not.

"God make me worthy your trust!" said I at last.

"'T is a good prayer, Martin. Now hear mine; 'tis one I have prayed full oft: God make you strong enough to forgive past wrongs and, forgetting vengeance, to love your enemy."

"'T is thing impossible!"

"Yet the impossible shall come to pass soon or late, Martin; this am I sure."

"And why so sure?"

"My heart telleth me so, Martin!" answered she drowsily and, looking down, I saw her eyes were closed and she on the verge of slumber. And beholding her thus, my self-hate grew, insomuch that her fingers loosing

their hold, I stole away my hand and, seeing her asleep, crept from the place. Being come to the stream I stood awhile staring down at the hurrying waters, minded to cast myself therein; but presently I turned aside and, coming amid leafy gloom, lay there outstretched, my face hidden from the stars and I very full of bitterness, for it seemed that I was as great a rogue and well-nigh as vile as ever Bartlemy had been. And thus merciful sleep found me at last.

CHAPTER XXVIII

How I Stood Resolute in My Folly

The day was still young when we reached our habitation and both of us glad to return, especially my lady.

"For truly I do grow to love this home of ours," said she and set herself to sweeping out her three caves. As for me, I was determined on making her an armchair forthright; to the which end I took my saw and set out for Deliverance Sands, there to cut and select such timber as I needed from my store. But scarce was I come thither than I uttered a shout of joy, for there, cast up high upon these white sands, lay a great mast in a tangle of ropes and cordage.

Drawing near, I saw this for the mainmast of some noble ship but lately wrecked, wherefore I hasted along the beach and out upon the reef to see if haply any other wreckage had come ashore, but found nothing to reward my search. Returning to the mast I saw, to my joy, that this cordage was all new and sound, though woefully tangled. Howbeit, I had soon unravelled some fifty yards of good stout twine, and abundance of more yet to hand, together with the heavier ropes such as shrouds and backstays. Taking this line, I came to that rocky cleft where I had killed the goat and clambering up the bush-grown cliff found it to be honeycombed with caves large and small and with abundant evidences of the animals I sought. Wherefore, choosing me a narrow, well-worn track, I set there a trap formed of a running noose, and this did I in divers other places, which done I returned to my labour on the mast. At the which occupation my lady, finding me, must needs fall to work beside me, aiding as well as she might like the true comrade she was.

Thus by late afternoon I had coiled and stowed safely

away more good hempen rope and cordage than I could ever want. This accomplished, I found time to praise my companion's diligence; but finding her all wearied out with such rough and arduous labour, grew mighty vexed with my heedlessness, reproaching myself therewith; but she (and all toil-worn as she was) laughed her weariness to scorn, as was ever her way.

"Why, Martin," said she, "labour is a good thing and noble, since it giveth health and strength to both mind and body. And 't is my joy to share in your labours when I may and a delight to see how, cast here destitute of all things, you have contrived so much already. The more I work and the harder, the more able am I for work, so trouble not if I do grow a little weary sometimes!" This comforted me somewhat until, chancing to see her hands, I caught them in mine and, turning them, saw these tender palms all red and blistered with the ropes; and, grieving over them, I would have kissed the poor little things had I dared (and indeed came mighty nigh doing it) as she perceived, I think, for she flushed and laughed and drew them from my hold.

"Nay, Martin," said she softly, "I would have you forget my sex — sometimes!"

"'T were a thing impossible!" said I, whereat she, stealing a glance up at me, flushed all the hotter.

"Why, then," said she, "you must not coddle and cosset me because I am a woman —"

"Never," quoth I. "'T is not my nature to do so."

"And yet you do, Martin —"

"As how?"

"Oh, in a many ways — these blisters now; why should your hands grow rough and hard and not mine? Nature hath formed me woman, but Fate hath made me your comrade, Martin. And how may I be truly your comrade except I share your toil?"

Now when I would have answered I could not and, turning from her to stare away across the limitless ocean, saw it a-gleam through a mist as it were.

"Surely," said I at last, "oh, surely never had man so sweet and true a comrade! And I so rude and unlovely — and in all ways so unworthy — "

"But you are not, Martin, you are not — "

"Aye, but I am — beyond your guessing, you that are so pure, so saintly — "

"Saintly? Oh, Martin!" and here she laughed, albeit a little tremulously. "Surely I am a very human saint, for I do grow mighty hungry and yearn for my supper. So prithee let us go and eat."

But on our way we turned aside to see if we had any fortune with my snares; sure enough, coming nigh the place, we heard a shuffling and snorting and presently discovered a goat fast by the neck and half-choked, and beside her a little kid pitifully a-bleating.

"Oh, Martin!" cried my lady and, falling on her knees, began caressing and fondling the little creature whiles I secured the dam, and mighty joyful. The goat, for all its strangling, strove mightily, but lashing its fore and hind legs I contrived to get it upon my shoulders and thus burdened set off homewards, my lady carrying the kid clasped to her bosom, and it very content there and small wonder.

"'T is sweet, pretty thing," said my lady, stroking its silky hair, "and shall soon grow tame."

"And here is the beginning of our flock; our cheese and butter shall not be long a-lacking now, comrade."

"You must fashion me a press, Martin."

"And a churn."

"Nay, I can manage well enough with one of our pipkins."

"But a churn would be easier for you, so a churn you shall have, of sorts."

This evening after supper, sitting by our fire, my lady (and despite her weariness) was merrier than her wont and very full of plans for the future, deciding for me what furniture I must construct next, as chairs (two) a cupboard with shelves and where these should stand when made.

"And, Martin," said she, "now that we own goats, I must have a dairy for my cheese-making, and my dairy shall be our larder, aye, and stillroom too, for I have been tending our garden lately and found growing many good herbs and simples. In time, Martin, these caves shall grow into a home indeed and all wrought by our own hands, and this is a sweet thought."

"Why, so it is," said I, "in very truth — but — "

"But what, sir?" she questioned, lifting admonishing finger.

"There may come a day when you weary of it; how then?"

"Nay, we are too busy — "

"Can it — could it be — " said I, beginning to stammer, "that you might live here thus content to — the end of your days?"

"The end of my days?" said she, staring thoughtfully into the fire. "Why, Martin, this is a long way in the future, I do pray, and our future is in the hands of God, so wherefore trouble?"

"Because I, who have been stranger to Happiness hitherto, dread lest it may desert me and leave me the more woeful."

"Are you then happy at last — and so suddenly, Martin?"

Now this put me to no little heart-searching and perplexity for, casting back over the time since our landing on the island, I knew that, despite my glooms and ill-humours, happiness had come to me in that hour I had found her alive.

"Why, I am no longer the miserable wretch I was," quoth I at last.

"Because of late you have forgot to grieve for yourself and past wrongs and sorrows, Martin. Mayhap you shall one day forget them quite."

"Never!" quoth I.

"Yes, so do I hope, Martin, with all my heart," said she and with a great sigh.

"Why, then, fain would I forget an I might, but 't is beyond me. The agony of the rowing-bench — the shame of stripes — the blood and bestiality of it all — these I may never forget."

"Why, then, Martin — dear Martin," said she, all suddenly, slipping from her stool to kneel before me and reach out her two hands, "I do pray our Heavenly Father, here and now before you, that you, remembering all this agony and shame, may make of it a crown of glory ennobling your manhood — that you, forgetting nothing, may yet put vengeance from you now and for ever and strive to forgive — to forgive, Martin, and win thereby your manhood and a happiness undreamed — " here she stopped, her bosom heaving, her eyes all tender pleading; and I (oh, deaf and purblind fool!) hearing, heard not, and seeing, saw nought but the witching beauty of her. And now, having her hands in mine, beholding her so near, I loosed her hands and turned away lest I should crush her to me.

"'T is impossible!" I muttered. "I am a man and no angel — 't is impossible!"

Hereupon she arose and stood some while looking down into the fire and never a word; suddenly, she turned as to leave me, then, sitting on her stool, drew out her hairpins and shook down her shining hair that showed bronze-red where the light caught it. And beholding her thus, her lovely face offset by the curtain of her hair, her deep, long-lashed eyes, the vivid scarlet of her mouth, I knew the world might nowhere show me a maid so perfect in beauty nor so vitally a woman.

"Martin!" said she very softly, as she began braiding a thick tress of hair, "have you ever truly loved any woman?"

"No," said I. "No!"

"Could you so love, I wonder?"

"No!" said I again and clenching my hands, "no — never!"

"Why, true," said she more softly. "Methinks in

your heart is no room for poor Love; 't is so over-full of hate, and hate is a disease incurable with you. Is 't not so, Martin?"

"Yes — no! Nay, how should I know?" quoth I.

"Yet should love befall you upon a day, 't would be love unworthy any good woman, Martin!"

"Why, then," said I, "God keep me from the folly of love."

"Pray rather that Love, of its infinite wisdom, teach you the folly of hate, Martin!"

"'T is a truth!" said I bitterly, "a truth that hath become part of me! It hath been my companion in solitude, my comfort in my shameful misery, my hope, my very life, or I had died else! And now — now you bid me forget it — as 't were some mere whimsy, some idle fancy — this thought that hath made me strong to endure such shames and tribulations as few have been forced to suffer!"

"Aye, I do, I do!" she cried. "For your own sake, Martin, and for mine."

"No!" quoth I. "A thousand times! This thought hath been life to me, and only with life may I forego it!"

At this, the busy fingers faltered in their pretty labour, and, bowing her head upon her hand, she sat, her face hid from me, until I, not doubting that she wept, grew uneasy and questioned her at last.

"Nay, my lady — since this must be so — wherefore grieve."

"Grieve?" says she, lifting her head, and I saw her eyes all radiant and her red lips up-curving in a smile. "Nay, Martin, I do marvel how eloquent you grow upon your wrongs; indeed, 't is as though you feared you might forget them. Thus do you spur up slothful memory which giveth me sure hope that one day 't will sleep to wake no more."

And now, or ever I might find answer, she rose and giving me "Good night" was gone, singing, to her bed; and I full of bewilderment. But suddenly as I sat thus, staring into the dying fire, she was back again.

"What now?" I questioned.

"Our goat, Martin! I may not sleep until I know her safe — come, let us go look!" and speaking, she reached me her hand. So I arose and thus with her soft, warm fingers in mine we went amid the shadows where I had tethered the goat to a tree hard beside the murmurous rill and found the animal lying secure and placidly enough, the kid beside her. The which sight seemed to please my lady mightily.

"But 't is shame the poor mother should go tied always thus. Could you not make a picket fence, Martin? And she should have some refuge against the storms," to the which I agreed. Thus as we went back, we fell to making plans, one project begetting another, and we very blithe about it.

CHAPTER XXIX

How My Dear Lady Was Lost to Me

And now followed a season of much hard work, each day bringing its varied tasks and we right joyous in our labour, so that ofttimes I would hear her singing away in her sweet voice merry as any grig, or find myself whistling lustily to the tap of my hammer. And now indeed my saw (and all rusty though it was) served me faithfully and well and my carpentry went forward apace. During this time also we added four goats and six kids to our flock so that we had good store of milk, and having, with my lady's help, made our net with strands of cord knotted crosswise, we caught therewith great plenty of fish.

Remembering my adventure with the Indian I furnished myself with a good stout pike and a couple of javelins; moreover, I set up divers marks, like rovers, and every day I would shoot at these with my bow so that I soon became so dexterous I could bring down a bird on the wing six times out of seven, though in teaching myself this proficiency I lost four of my Indian arrows beyond recovery.

Thus sped the time all too quickly, but with each day came a greater understanding and a deeper amity betwixt my lady and me.

Now much and very much might I set down here concerning this my sweet comrade her many noble qualities, and how, as our fellowship lengthened, I (that was a man selfish beyond thought), finding her unselfish always and uncomplaining, seeing her so brave in the face of adversity, and indomitable to overcome all difficulty, yet ever and always a woman gracious and tender, I, by my very

reverence for her sweet womanhood, became in some sense a better man.

I might tell how, when my black moods took me, the mere sight of her, the sound of her voice, the touch of her hand, nay her very nearness was enough to dispel them.

I might paint to your imagination the way her hair curled at her temples, the trick she had of biting her nether lip when at all put out, or the jut of her pretty chin when angered. Then the sweet, vibrant softness of her voice, her laughter, the wonder of her changing moods, all these I would dilate upon if I might, since 't is joy to me, but lest I prove wearisome I will hasten on to the finding of Black Bartlemy's Treasure, of all that led up to it and all those evils that followed after it. And this bringeth me to a time whenas we sat, she and I, eating our breakfast and the world all radiant with a young sun.

"To-night," said she, "if my calculations be right, should be a new moon. And I am glad, for I do love the moon."

"Aye, but how should you judge this?" said I, wondering.

"Because I have kept a record, Martin. A stroke for each day and a cross for every Sunday."

"Excellent!" quoth I. "Then you will know how long we have lived here?"

"Two months and five days, Martin."

"So long a time?" said I, amazed.

"Hath it seemed so very long?" she questioned.

"No indeed! No, and there's the marvel!"

"'T is no marvel, Martin; you have been too full of business to heed time. Let us reckon up what we have achieved thus far. First of all a three-legged stool for me—"

"Hairpins!" said I.

"A spoon, Martin, and shoes for me—"

"Lamps and candles!" quoth I.

"A table, Martin—"

"A fishing line and two hooks—"

"Two armchairs, Martin, a cupboard and a press."

"A churn!"

"You are forgetting our five pipkins, Martin."

"True," said I, "and clumsy things they are!"

"But very useful, sir! Next a fishing-net, and a bed for me — Here is fine achievement, Martin! Are you not proud to have wrought so much and with so little?"

"But there is much yet to do!" quoth I.

"So much the better!" said she. "Thus far I am well content —"

"And happy?" I demanded.

"Aye, Martin — are you?"

Now at this I fell to profound reverie and she also, and this the subject of my musing; viz:

In every man and woman born into this world (as it doth seem to me) God putteth some of His infinite self whereby all things are possible in degree greater or smaller; for to the God within us all things are possible, 't is our very humanity that limits our potentialities. Confidence in this power within us is a mighty aid to all endeavour whereby we, our coward flesh notwithstanding, may attempt great things and though, being human, we ofttimes fail, yet this very effort strengthens and ennobles us.

"Who art thou," cries Flesh, "to adventure thing so great and above thy puny strength to perform. Who art thou?" "I am God!" answers Man-soul, "since finite man am I only by reason of thee, base, coward Flesh." Thus (to my thinking) in every man is angel and dæmon, each striving 'gainst each for the soul of him; whereby he doeth evil or good according to the which of these twain he aideth to victory. Howbeit, thus is it with me, I being, despite my seeming slowness, of quick and passionate temper and of such desperate determination that once set on a course needs would I pursue it, though it led to my own confounding and destruction. For now, indeed, I wrought that which brought on my lady great sorrow and grievous peril, and on myself shame, bloodshed and a black despair, and this the manner of it.

"Are you not happy, Martin?" said she. "Happy and proud to have accomplished so much with so little?"

"No!" said I, and so bitterly-fierce that she blenched from me. "For look now," said I, clenching my fist, "here have we wrought and slaved together day in and day out — and to what end?"

"That we may live — to our comfort — " answered she a little breathlessly.

"And to what end?" I demanded. "To what purpose have you cozened me to labour thus?"

"I? I don't understand you, Martin!" said she unsteadily.

"Here 's you cast alone with me on this island. 'He is a man,' says you to yourself, 'and I a lonely woman. So must I keep him busy, his mind ever employed on some labour, no matter what, lest peradventure he make love to me — '"

"Stop!" cried she angrily, leaping up to her feet all in a moment. "For shame, Martin Conisby! You wrong me and yourself — I am your comrade — "

"Nay, you are a woman, very subtle, and quick-witted as you are beautiful. So have you keep me in ploy thus, yearning meanwhile for some ship — anything to bear you safe away from me! Often have I seen you staring seaward and praying for a sail — "

"Oh, you lie, Martin, you lie! Ah, have I not trusted you — ?"

"Aye, as one might a tiger, by humouring me and distracting my attention! All these weeks I have scarce touched you and kissed you never, nor had I thought to — but now, by God — "

"Martin — Oh, Martin, what would you — ?"

"Kiss you!" said I savagely, and caught her wrists.

"Nay, that you shall never do — with that look on your face!" cried she and twisted so strongly as nigh broke my hold; but despite all her desperate striving, struggle how she might, I dragged her to me, pinning her arms in my cruel embrace; but still she withstood me and with

such fury of strength that twice we staggered and came near falling, until all at once she yielded and lay all soft, her breath coming in little, pitiful, panting groans. So I kissed her as I would, her hair, her eyes, her parted lips, her cool soft throat, until sun and trees and green grass seemed to spin and whirl dizzily about me, until my lips were wet with her salt tears.

"Oh, God — Oh, God!" she whispered. "Oh, Martin, that I trusted so; will you kill my faith and trust? Will you shame your comrade? You that I loved — "

"Loved!" said I, catching my breath and staring down at her tear-wet lashes. "Loved me — oh, Damaris — !"

"Aye, loved and honoured you above all men until the beast broke loose — "

"And now?" cried I hoarsely. "And now — what? Speak?"

"God's pity — loose me, Martin!"

"And what now — tell me. Is 't hate now, scorn and contempt — as 't was aboard ship?"

"Oh, Martin — let me go!" she sobbed.

"Answer me; is it hate henceforth?"

"Yes!" she panted. "Yes!" and tore herself from my hold. But, as she turned to fly me, I caught her back to me and, madman that I was, bent her backward across my knee that I might look down into her eyes; and, meeting my look, she folded her hands upon her bosom and, closing her eyes, spoke broken and humbled:

"Take — take your will of me — Black Bartlemy — I am not brave enough to stab you as — she did — "

Now at this I shivered and must needs cast my gaze towards that great pimento tree that towered afar off. So then my hateful dream had come true, and now I knew myself for black a rogue as ever Bartlemy had been. So I loosed her and, starting up, stood staring across the desolation of ocean.

"Oh, Damaris," said I at last, "here in my belt was my knife to your hand; 't were better you had stabbed me indeed and I, dying, would have kissed your feet after

the manner of yon dead rogue. As it is I must live hating myself for having destroyed the best, the sweetest thing life could offer me and that, your trust. But oh, my lady," said I, looking down where she knelt, her face bowed upon her hands, "I do love you reverently and beyond my life."

"Even greatly enough to forego your vengeance!" she questioned softly and without glancing up.

"God help me!" cried I. "How may I forget the oath I swore on my father's grave?"

"You broke your oath to me!" said she, never stirring. "So do I know that true love hath not touched you."

"Think of me as you will," quoth I, "but—"

"I know!" said she, raising her head at last and looking up at me, "I am sure, Martin. Where hate is, true love can never be, and love, howsoever vehement, is gentle and reverent and being of God, a very holy thing! But you have made of it a thing of passion, merciless and cruel; 't is love debased—"

"So will I get me hence," said I. "For since I have destroyed your faith, how shall you ever sleep again and know yourself secure and such rogue as I near you. I 'll go, Damaris; I 'll away and take your fears along with me."

Then, the while she watched me dumbly, I slung my bow and quiver of arrows about me, set the hatchet in my girdle and, taking my pike, turned to go; but, checking my haste, went into the cave (she following me silent always) and, taking the pistol from where it hung, examined flint and priming and charge and laid it on the table.

"Should you need me at any time, shoot off this pistol, and I will come," said I, "so—good-by, my lady!" But scarce was I without the cave than she came to me with my chain shirt in her hands and, when I would have none of it, grew the more insistent.

"Put it on," urged she gently; "who can tell what

may befall you; so put it on, I pray!" Thus in the end I donned it, though with ill grace; which done, I took my pike across my shoulder and strode away. And when I had gone some distance, I glanced back and saw her standing where I had left her, watching me and with her hands clasped tight together.

"Good-by, Martin!" said she. "Oh, good-by!" and vanished into the gloom of the cave.

As for me I strode on at speed and careless of direction, for my mind was a whirl of conflicting thoughts and a bitter rage against myself. Thus went I a goodish while and all unheeding and so at last found myself lost amidst mazy thickets and my eight-foot pike very troublesome. Howbeit I presently gained more open ways and went at speed, though whither I cared not. The sun was westering, when, coming out from the denser woods, I saw before me that high hill whose rocky summit dominated the island, and bent my steps thitherward; and then all in a moment my heart gave a great leap and I stood still, for borne to me on the soft air came a sudden, sharp sound and though faint with distance I knew it for the report of a firearm. At this thrice-blessed sound an overwhelming great joy and gratitude surged within me, since thus, of her infinite mercy, my lady had summoned me back; and now as I retraced my steps full of thankfulness, I marvelled to find my eyes a-watering and myself all trembling eagerness to behold her loveliness again, to hear her voice, mayhap to touch her hand; indeed I felt as we had been parted a year rather than a brief hour. And now I got me to dreaming how I should meet her and how she would greet me. She should find a new Martin, I told myself.

Suddenly these deluding dreams were shivered to horrible fear and myself brought, sweating, to a standstill by another sound that smote me like a blow, for I knew this for the deep-toned report of a musket. For a moment I stood leaning on my pike as one dazed, then the hateful truth of it seized me, and I began to run like any mad-

man. Headlong I went, bursting my way through tangled vines and undergrowth, heedless of the thorns that gashed me, cursing such obstacles as stayed me; now o'erleaping thorny tangles, now pausing to beat me a way with my pikestaff, running at breathless speed whenever I might until (having taken a wrong direction in my frenzy) I came out amid those vines and bushes that bordered the lake of the waterfall and right over against the great rock I have mentioned. But from where I was (the place being high) I could see over and beyond this rock; and as I stood panting and well-nigh spent, mighty distraught and my gaze bent thitherward, I shivered (despite the sweat that streamed from me) with sudden awful chill, for from those greeny depths I heard a scream, wild and heart-rending, and, knowing this voice, grew sick and faint and sank weakly to my knees. And now I heard vile laughter, then hoarse shouts and forth of the underbrush opposite broke a wild, piteous figure, all rent and torn, yet running very fleetly. As I watched, cursing my helplessness, she tripped and fell but was up again all in a moment, yet too late, for then I saw her struggling in the clasp of a ragged, black-bearded fellow and with divers other men running towards them.

And now madness seized me indeed, for between us was the lake, and, though my bow was strung and ready, I dared not shoot lest I harm her. Thus as I watched in an agony at my impotence, my lady broke her captor's hold and came running, and he and his fellows hard after her. Straight for the rock she came and being there stood a moment to stare about her like the piteous, hunted creature she was:

"Martin!" she cried. "Oh, Martin!" And uttering this dolorous cry (and or ever I might answer) she tossed wild arms to heaven and plunged over and down. I saw her body strike the water in a clean dive and vanish into those dark and troubled deeps, and, with breath in check and glaring eyes, waited for her to reappear; I heard vague shouts and cries where her pursuers watched

for her likewise, but I heeded them nothing, staring ever and waiting — waiting. But these gloomy waters gave no sign, and so at last my breath burst from me in a bitter, sobbing groan. One by one the minutes dragged by until I thought my brain must crack, for nowhere was sign of that beloved shape. And then — all at once — I knew she must be dead; this sweet innocent slain thus before my eyes, snatched out of life and lost to me for all time, lost to me beyond recovery.

At last I turned my haggard, burning eyes upon her murderers; four of them there were and all staring into those cruel, black waters below and not a word betwixt them. Suddenly the black-bearded man snapped his fingers and laughed even as my bowstring twanged; then I saw him leap backwards, screaming with pain, his shoulder transfixed by my arrow. Immediately (and ere I might shoot again) his fellows dragged him down and lying prone on their bellies let fly wildly in my direction with petronel and musquetoon. And now, had I been near enough, I would have leaped upon them to slay and be slain, since life was become a hateful thing. As it was, crouched there 'mid the leaves, I watched them crawl from the rock, dragging their hurt comrade with them. Then, seeing them stealing off thus, a mighty rage filled me, ousting all other emotion, and (my bow in one hand and pike in the other) I started running in pursuit. But my great pike proving over-cumbersome, I cast it away that I might go the faster, trusting rather to my five arrows and the long-bladed knife in my girdle; and the thought of this knife and its deadly work at close quarters heartened me mightily as I ran; yet in a while, the passion of my anger subsiding, grief took its place again and a hopeless desolation beyond words. So ran I, blinded by scalding tears and my heart breaking within me, and thus came I to a place of rocks and, looking not to my feet, it chanced that I fell and, striking my head against a rock, knew no more; and, lost in a blessed unconsciousness, forgot the anguish of my breaking heart.

When at last I opened my eyes I found myself in a place of gloom and very stiff and sore; therefore I lay where I was nor sought to move. Little by little as I lay thus 'twixt sleep and wake, I was aware of a pallid glow all about me and lifting heavy head, saw the moon low down in the sky like a great golden sickle. And staring up at this, of a sudden back rushed memory (and with it my hopeless misery) for now I remembered how, but a few short hours since, my dear lady had prophesied this new moon. Hereupon, crouching there, my aching head bowed upon my hands, I gave myself up to my despair and a corroding grief beyond all comforting.

From where I crouched I might look down upon this accursed lake, a misty horror of gloomy waters and, beholding this, I knew that my gentle, patient comrade was gone from me, that somewhere within those black and awful depths her tender body was lying. She was dead, her sweet voice for ever hushed, she that had been so vitally alive! And remembering all her pretty ways I grew suddenly all blind with tears and, casting myself down, lay a great while sobbing and groaning until I could weep no more.

At last, sitting up, I wondered to find my head so painful and putting up my hand found my face all wet and sticky with blood that flowed from a gash in my hair. And remembering how I had fallen and the reason of my haste, I started up and forthwith began seeking my knife and hatchet, and presently found them, hard by where I had tripped. Now standing thus, knife in one hand and hatchet in the other, I turned to look down upon these dark and evil waters.

"Good-by, my lady!" said I. "Fare thee well, sweet comrade! Before to-morrow dawn we will meet again, I pray, and shalt know me for truer man and better than I seemed!" So, turning my back on the lake, I went to seek my vengeance on her destroyers and death at their hands, and it might be so.

In a while I came to that torrent where the water

flowed out from the lake, its bed strewn with tumbled rocks and easy enough to cross, the water being less in volume by reason of the dry weather. All at once I stopped, for amid these rocks and boulders I saw caught all manner of drift, as sticks and bushes, branches and the like, washed down by the current and which, all tangled and twisted together, choked this narrow defile, forming a kind of barrier against the current. Now as I gazed at this, my eyes (as if directed by the finger of God) beheld something caught in this barrier, something small and piteous to see but which set me all a-trembling and sent me clambering down these rocks; and reaching out shaking hand I took up that same three-pronged pin I had carved and wrought for her hair. Thus stood I to view this through my blinding tears and to kiss and kiss it many times over, because it had known her better than I. But all at once I thrust this precious relic into my bosom and stared about me with new and awful expectation, for the current which brought this should bring more. So I began to seek among these rocks where the stream ran fast and in each pool and shallow, and once, sweating and shivering, stooped to peer down at something that gleamed white from a watery hollow and gasped my relief to find it was no more than a stone. None the less sought I with a prayer on my lips, dreading to find that white and tender body mangled by the cruel rocks, yet searching feverishly none the less. Long I stayed there, until the moon, high-risen, sent down her tender beam as though to aid me. But of this time I will write no more, since even now it is a misery to recall.

At last, I (that knew myself a man about to die) turned me towards our habitation, those rocks she had called "home," and reaching the plateau I stood still, swept alternately by grief and passion, to see this our refuge all desecrate by vile hands, our poor furniture scattered without the cave. And presently I espied her three-legged stool standing where she had been wont to sit to watch and cheer me at my labour; coming thither I

fell on my knees and laying my head thereon wetted this unlovely thing with my tears and kissed it many times. And as I lay thus, much that she had done and said (little things forgot till now) rushed upon my memory; her sweet, calm presence seemed all about me, soothing away the passion of my grief. And in this hour that was to end my miserable life, I knew at last that I had loved her purely and truly from the first and with such love as might have lifted me to heaven. And kneeling thus, I spake aloud to this her sweet presence that seemed to hover about me:

"Oh, Damaris, beloved — as thou, to 'scape shame, hast chosen death — in death I 'll follow thee — trusting to a merciful God that I may find thee again!" Then uprising from my knees, I came out from the shadows and, standing in the moon's radiance, looked heedfully to the edge of my axe, and with it gripped in my hand, went out to find death.

CHAPTER XXX

How I Sought Death but Found It Not

Beyond Deliverance Sands I saw the glow of their fire and drawing thither knew them camped in the shadow of that great pimento tree and within that rocky gorge the which had afforded my dear lady and me our first night's shelter. Being come thither, I sat me down and took counsel how best to attack them that I might slay as many as possible ere they gave me the death I hungered for; and the end of it was I began to scale the cliff, my goatskin buskins soundless and very sure amid the rocks.

As I mounted I heard the hoarse murmur of their voices and knew by their very intonation (since I could hear no words as yet) that they were speaking English. Reaching the summit, and mighty cautious, I came where I might look down into the cleft.

They sprawled about their fire, four grim-looking fellows, ragged and unkempt, three of them talking together and one who lay groaning ever and anon.

"Be damned t' ye, Joel, for a lily-livered dog!" growled a great, bony fellow. "Here 's good an island as man can want —"

"And full o' bloody Indians — eh, Humphrey?" says a black-jowled fellow, turning on the wounded man. "Us do know the Indians, don't us, Humphrey? Inca, Aztec, Mosquito and Cimaroon, we know 'em and their devil's ways, don't us, Humphrey?"

"Aye — aye!" groaned the wounded man. "They tortured me once, and they 've done for me at last, by God! My shoulder 's afire —"

"And the shaft as took ye, Humphrey, were a Indian shaft — a Indian shaft, were n't it, lad? And all trimmed

wi' gold, aren't it? Here, ye may see for yourselves! 'Sequently I do know it for the shaft of a chief or cacique, and where a cacique is there's Indians wi' him — oh, thick as thieves — I know and Humphrey knows! I say this curst island be full of Indians, thick as fleas, curse 'em! And they 'll have us soon or late and torment us. So what I says is, let's away at the flood and stand away for the Main — the sea may be bad now and then, but Indians be worse — always and ever!"

"Why, as to that, Ned, the Indians ha' left us alone — "

"Aye!" cried the bony man. "And what o' the wench; her was no Indian, I lay! A fine, dainty piece she was, by hooky! And handsome, ah — handsome! But for Humphrey's bungling — "

Here the man Humphrey groaned and cursed the speaker bitterly.

"Howbeit — 't was a Indian arrer!" says Ned. "And that means Indians, and Indians means death to all on us — ask Humphrey! Death — eh, Humphrey?"

"Aye — death!" groaned Humphrey. "Death's got his grapples aboard me now. I 'm a-dying mates — dying! Get me aboard; death will come easier in open water — "

"Why, if ye must die, Humphrey," growled the bony man, "die, lad, die and get done wi' it, the sooner the better. As to Indians, I wait till I see 'em, and as for Death — "

"Death?" gasped Humphrey. "Here's for you first!" And whipping out a knife, he made a fierce thrust at the speaker; but the others closed with him. Then as they strove together, panting and cursing, I rose to come at them; but the wounded man, chancing to lift his head, saw me where I stood, the moonlight on my bloody face, and uttered a hoarse scream.

"Death!" cried he. "'T is on us, mates — look, look yonder! Death and wounds — yonder he comes for all of us — oh, mates, look! Yon's death — for all on us!"

But in this moment I leaped down upon them from above, sending one man sprawling and scattering their

fire, and 'mid whirling sparks and smoke, within this dim rock-cleft, we fought with a merciless fury and desperation beyond words. A pistol flashed and roared and then another as I leapt with whirling axe and darting knife. I remember a wild hurly-burly of random blows, voices that shouted hoarse blasphemies, screams and groans, a whirl of vicious arms, of hands that clutched; once I reeled to hard-driven sword-thrust, a knife flashed and stabbed beneath my arm, but twice I got home with my knife and once a man sobbed and went down beneath my hatchet — and then they were running and I after them. But I had taken a scathe in my leg and twice I fell; thus they reached their boat with some hundred yards to spare, and I saw their frantic struggles to launch it as I staggered after them; but ere I could reach them they had it afloat and tumbled aboard pell-mell. Then came I, panting curses, and plunged into the sea, wading after them up to my middle and so near that, aiming a blow at one of them, I cut a great chip from the gunwale; but, reeling from the blow of an oar, sank to my knees, and a wave breaking over me bore me backward, choking. Thus when I found my feet again they were well away and plying their oars lustily, whiles I, roaring and shouting, stood to watch them until the boat was lost in the distance. Now as I stood thus, raging bitterly at my impotence, I bethought me that I had seen but three men run and, turning about, hasted back to deal with the fourth. Reaching the scene of the struggle, I came on the man Humphrey outstretched upon his back in the moonlight and his face well-nigh shorn asunder. Seeing him thus so horribly dead, I went aside and fell to scrubbing my hatchet, blade and haft, with the cleanly sand.

Then came I and, grasping this thing had been named Humphrey, I dragged it a-down the sands and hove it forthwith into the sea, standing thereafter to watch it borne out on the receding tide. Now, as I watched thus, came a wave that lifted the thing so that this dead man seemed to rise up and wave an arm to me ere he vanished.

This done (and I yet alive!) I took to wandering aimlessly hither and thither and chancing into the rocky cleft found lying three muskets and four pistols with bandoliers full-charged, together with a knife and a couple of swords; these I set orderly together and so wandered away again.

All this night I rambled about thus, and dawn found me seated 'neath Bartlemy's tree, staring at the ocean yet seeing it not.

So God had refused my appeal! It seemed I could not die. And presently, chancing to look down at myself in the growing light, I understood the reason, for here was I armed in my shirt of mail (forgotten till now) and scowling down at this, I saw its fine, steel links scratched and scored by many blows and bedaubed here and there with blood. So then (thinks I) 't was she had saved me alive and in this thought found me some small solace. Hereupon I arose and went down to the sea, limping by reason of my hurt (an ugly gash above my knee), being minded to wash from me the grime and smears that fouled me. But or ever I reached the water, I stopped, for there, more hateful in sun than moonlight, lay that ghastly thing had been Humphrey. There he lay, cast up by the tide, and now, with every wave that broke, he stirred gently and moved arms and legs in wanton, silly fashion, nodding with his shattered head as in mockery of me. So I went and, seizing hold upon the thing, swung it upon my back and, thus burdened, climbed out upon the reef (and with mighty trouble for my strength seemed oozing out of me). Reaching a place at last where the water ran deep I paused and with sudden, painful effort whirled the thing above my head and hove it far out where, splashing, it fell with sullen plunge and vanished from my sight. But even so I was possessed of sudden, uneasy feeling that the thing had turned on me and was swimming back to shore, so that, drawing my knife, I must needs sit there a while to watch if this were so indeed. At last I arose, but being come to Deliverance Sands, whirled suddenly about, ex-

pectant to behold that dead thing uprising from the surge to flap derisive arms at me. And this did I many times, being haunted thus all that day, and for many weary hours thereafter, by this dead man Humphrey. Presently as I went, heedless of all direction and the sun very hot, I began to stagger in my gait and to mutter her name to myself and presently to shout it, until the cliffs gave back my cries and the hollow caves murmured, "Damaris! Oh, Damaris!"

And now was a mist all about me wherein dim forms moved mocking me, and ever and anon methought to behold my lady, but dim and very far removed from me so that sometimes I ran and ofttimes I fell to moaning and shedding weak and impotent tears. Truly a black and evil day for me this, whereof I have but a vague memory save only of pain, a hopeless weariness and intolerable thirst. Thus it was sunset when I found myself once more upon that grassy plateau, creeping on hands and knees, though how I came thither I knew not. I remember drinking from the little rill and staggering within the cave there to fall and lie, filling the place with my lamentations and oft-repeated cry of "Damaris! Oh, Damaris!" I remember a patch of silver light, a radiance that crept across the gloom and of dreaming my lady beside me as of old and of babbling of love and forgiveness, of pain and heartbreak, whiles I watched the beam of light creeping nigh me upon the floor. Until, sobbing and moaning, yet gazing ever upon this light, I saw grow upon it a sudden dark shape that moved, heard a rustle behind me, a footstep — a cry! And knowing this for the man Humphrey come upon me at last in my weakness, I strove to rise, to turn and face him, but finding this vain, cried out upon him for murderer. "'T was you killed her — my love — the very soul of me — 't was you, Humphrey, that are dead — come, that I may slay you again!" Then feeling his hands upon me, I strove to draw my knife but could not and groaned, and so knowledge passed from me.

My next memory was of sun and a dance of leafy

shadows on the wall of the cave, the which shadows held my attention so that I had no will to look other where; for these were merry shadows that leapt in sportive gambols, that danced and swayed, pleasing me mightily. And as I watched these antic shadows I could hear the pleasant murmur of the little rill without the cave, that bubbled with sweet, soft noises like small, babbling voices that brake ever and anon into elfin laughter. And presently, mingled with this pretty babblement, I seemed to hear a whisper:

"Martin! Dear Martin!"

And now I saw my lady plunge to death from the rock and started up, filling the place with my lamentations, until for very weakness I lay hushed and heard again the soft rippling of the brook and therewith her voice very sweet and faint and far away:

"Martin! Dear Martin!"

I remember a season of a blackness in which dim-seen, evil things menaced me, and a horror of dreams wherein I, fettered and fast bound, must watch my sweet lady struggle, weeping, in the arms of vile rogues whiles I strove desperately to break my bonds and, finding this vain, fell to raging madness and dashed myself hither and thither to slay myself and end my torment. Or, axe in hand, amid smoke and flame, I fell upon her murderers; then would I smite down the man Humphrey only for him to rise to be smitten again and yet again, nodding shattered head and flapping nerveless arms in derision of me until, knowing I might never slay him — he being already dead — I turned to flee but with him ever behind me and in my ears his sobbing cry of "Death for all of us — death!" And feeling his hands on me, I would fall to desperate struggle until the blackness closed over me again, thick and stifling like a sea.

And behind all these horrors was a haunting knowledge that I was going mad, that this man Humphrey was waiting for me out beyond the surf, beckoning to me with flapping arms, and had cast on me a spell whereby, as

my brain shrivelled to madness, my body was shrivelling and changing into that of Black Bartlemy. Always I knew that Humphrey waited me beyond the reef, watchful for my coming and growing ever more querulous and eager as the spell wrought on me so that he began to call to me in strange, sobbing voice, hailing me by my new name.

"Bartlemy, ahoy! Black Bartlemy — Bartlemy, ho! Come your ways to Humphrey, that being dead can die no more and, knowing all, doth know you for Bartlemy crept back from hell. So come, Bartlemy, come and be as I am. And there's others here, proper lads as wants ye too, dead men all — by the rope, by the knife, by the bullet — oho!"

There be two at the fore
At the main be three more
Dead men that swing all of a row;
Here's fine, dainty meat
For the fishes to eat:
Black Bartlemy — Bartlemy, ho!

There's a fine, Spanish dame,
Joanna's her name,
Must follow wherever ye go;
Till your black heart shall feel
Your own cursed steel;
Black Bartlemy — Bartlemy, ho!

And I, hearkening to this awful sobbing voice, sweating and shivering in the dark, knew that, since I was indeed Black Bartlemy, sooner or later I must go.

Thus it befell that of a sudden I found myself, dazzled by a fierce sun, supporting me against a rock and my breath coming in great gasps. And in a while, my eyes growing stronger, I stared away to the reef where this man Humphrey waited me with his dead men all; and since I must needs go there, I wept because it was so far off.

Now as I stood grieving thus, I saw one stand below me on Deliverance, looking also towards the reef, a woman

tall and very stately and habited in gown of rich satin and embroidery caught in at slender waist with golden girdle, and about her head a scarf of lace. And this woman stood with bowed head and hands tight-clasped as one that grieved also; suddenly she raised her head and lifted folded hands to the cloudless heaven in passionate supplication. And beholding her face, I knew her for the poor Spanish lady imploring a just heaven for vengeance on me that had been her undoing; and uttering a great cry, I sank on my knees:

"Mercy, O God — mercy! Let me not be mad!" Yet, even as I prayed, I knew that madness was upon me ere I plunged again into the dreadful dark.

But God (whose mercy is infinite) hearkened to my distressful cry for, in a while, He brought me up from that black abyss and shewed me two marvels the which filled me with wonder and a sudden, passionate hope. And the first was the bandage that swathed my thigh; and this of itself enough to set my poor wits in a maze of speculation. For this bandage was of linen, very fine and delicate, such as I knew was not to be found upon the whole island; yet here was it, bound about my hurt, plain and manifest and set there by hands well-skilled in such kindly work.

And my second wonder was a silver beaker or ewer very artfully wrought and all chased and embossed with designs of fruit and flower and of a rare craftsmanship; and this jug set within my reach and half full of milk. The better to behold this, I raised myself and with infinite labour. But now, and suddenly, she was before me again, this poor Spanish lady I had slain upon a time, wherefore I blenched and shrank from her coming. But she, falling upon her knees, sought to clasp me in her arms, crying words I heeded not as (maugre my weakness) I strove wildly to hold her off.

"I am Bartlemy that killed you!" says I. "I am Black Bartlemy! They know out yonder beyond the reef; hark! and you shall hear how they hail me — "

"Oh, kind God, teach me how I may win him back to

knowledge!" So crying, this Spanish lady of a sudden unpinned her hair and shook its glossy ripples all about her:

"Look, Martin," cried she. "Don't you know me — Oh, don't you know me now? I am Joan — come back to you."

"No!" said I. "No — Damaris is dead and lost — I saw her die!"

"Then who am I, Martin?"

"The Spanish lady or — one of the ghosts do haunt me."

But now her hands were clasping mine, her soft hair all about me as she stooped. And feeling these hands so warm and vital, so quick and strong with life, I began to tremble and strove against her no longer; and so she stooped above me that I might feel her sweet breath on fevered cheek and brow:

"'T is your Damaris, Martin," says she, her tears falling fast; "'t is your comrade hath come back to comfort you."

Now seeing how I stared all trembling and amazed, she set her arms about me and, drawing me to her bosom, clasped me there. And my head pillowed thus, I fell a-weeping but these tears were tears of joy and a thankfulness beyond all words.

"Oh, Damaris," quoth I at last, "if this be death, I care not, since I have thee again!"

"Why, Martin," says she, weeping with me, "art indeed so glad — so glad to find again thy poor comrade?"

And thus, knowing myself forgiven, a great joy sang within me.

CHAPTER XXXI

How My Dear Lady Came Back to Me

I was sitting in one of our armchairs amid the leafy shade, watching her knead dough with her two pretty fists. To this end she rolled up the sleeves of her splendid gown; and thus I, hearkening to her story, must needs stare at her soft, round arms and yearn mightily to kiss their velvety smoothness and, instantly berating myself therefor, shifted my gaze from these temptations to my own unlovely figure, contrasting myself and my worn garments with her rich attire and proud and radiant beauty; she was again the great lady and far removed above such poor wretch as I, for all her pitiful tenderness.

"... and so when I plunged from the rock," she was saying, "I never thought to see this dear place again or the blessed sun! And I sank ... oh, deep — deep! Then, Martin, I seemed to be caught in some current, far down there in the darkness, that whirled and tossed me and swept me behind the torrent. And in the rock was a great cavern sloping to the water, and there this current threw me, all breathless and nigh dead, Martin —"

"God be thanked!" says I fervently.

"And there I lay all night, Martin, very sick and fearful. When day came, I saw this great cave opened into a smaller and this into yet another. So I came to a passage in the rock and, because there was none other way for me, I followed this — and then — oh, Martin!"

"What?" quoth I, leaning forward.

"Have you ever been to the palace at Versailles, Martin?"

"Once, as a boy with my father —"

"Well, Martin, the cave — the hall I came to at last —

was more splendid than any Versailles can show. And then I knew that I had found — Black Bartlemy's Treasure!"

"Ha!" quoth I. "And is it indeed so great?"

"Beyond description!" said she, clasping her floury hands and turning on me with shining eyes. "I have held in my hands jewels — oh, by the handful! Great pearls and diamonds, rubies, emeralds, sapphires — beybnd price!"

"Aye!" I nodded. "But was this all —?"

"All, Martin?" asked she, staring.

"Why, according to Adam, there should be all manner of stores," said I. "Powder and shot, tools — a carpenter's chest — "

"They are all there, with provisions of every kind; as witness this flour, Martin; but I heeded only these wondrous jewels!" Hereupon she turned to her work again, describing to me the splendour of these precious stones and the wonder of Bartlemy's treasure, whiles I, viewing her loveliness, would have given such foolish treasure a thousand times for but her little finger, as watching the play of her round arms again, I fell a-sighing, whereon she turns, all anxious questioning:

"Doth your wound trouble you, Martin?"

"Nay indeed," answered I, shaking my head. "I am very well, I thank you!"

"Then wherefore sigh so deep and oft?"

"I am a vasty fool!"

"Are you, Martin — why?" But in place of answer I rose and, coming beside her, scowled to see the tender flesh of her arms all black and bruised.

"What is this?" I demanded.

"Nought to matter!"

"Who did it?"

"You, Martin. In your raving you were very strong, mistaking me for the poor Spanish lady — "

"Oh, forgive me!" I cried and stooping to this pretty arm would have touched my lips thereto for mere pity but

checked myself, fearing to grieve her; perceiving this, she came a little nearer.

"You may — an you so desire, Martin," said she, "though 't is all floury!" So I kissed her arm, tenderly and very reverently, as it had been some holy thing (as indeed so I thought it).

"I 'm glad 't was I did this, comrade."

"Glad, Martin?"

"Aye! I had rather 't was myself than yon evil rogues — nay — forget them," said I, seeing her shiver. "Plague on me for reminding you — "

"Hush, Martin!"

"Why, then, forget them — and I have their weapons to cope with 'em should they return — "

"Now, thank God!" cried she, clasping my hand in both of hers. "Thank God, Martin! I feared you had killed them all!"

"Why, I did my best," I sighed, shaking my head, "but they were too strong for me! Would to God I had indeed slain — "

"Hush, Martin, oh, hush!" And here she clapped her pretty hand to my lips, where I straightway 'prisoned it to my kisses. "Though truly," said she whiles this was a-doing, "from your raving I feared them all slain at your hand, so do I rejoice to know you innocent of their deaths!" Here, her hand released, she fell a-laughing (albeit a little tremulously) to see my face all patched with flour; and so, back to her labour.

"But Martin," said she, turning to glance at me in a while, "you must be very terrible to drive away these four great men, and very brave!"

"Here was no bravery," quoth I; "methought you surely dead, and I meant them to slay me also."

"Did you — miss me — so greatly?" she questioned and not looking at me.

"Yes!"

"You fought them in Skeleton Cove, beyond Deliverance, Martin?"

"Aye! You found their guns there?"

"And the sand all trampled and hatefully stained. 'T is an evil place, Martin."

"And so it is!" says I. "But as to these weapons, there were two good firelocks I mind and beside — "

"They are all here, Martin, guns and swords and pistols. You raved for them in your sickness, so I fetched them while you slept. Though indeed you have no need of these; there be weapons of every sort in the treasure cave; 't is like an arsenal."

"Ha, with good store of powder and shot, comrade?"

"Yes, Martin."

"How many weeks have I lain sick, comrade?"

"Nay, 't was only four days."

At this I fell to marvelling that so much of agony might be endured in so little time.

"And you — tended me, Damaris?"

"Why, to be sure, Martin."

"And so saved my life."

"So I pray may it be a life lived to noble purpose, Martin."

And now I sat a while very thoughtful and watched her shape the dough into little cakes and set them to bake.

"I must contrive you an oven and this at once!" said I.

"When you are strong again, Martin."

"Nay, I 'm well, thanks to your care of me. And truly 't will be wonderful to eat bread again."

"But, Martin, I warned you I had no yeast!" said she, looking at me a little anxiously. "Nay, sir, why must you smile?"

"'T is strange to see you at such labour and clad so vastly fine!"

"Indeed, sir, needs must this your cook-maid go bedight like any queen since nought is there in Black Bartlemy's Treasure that is not sumptuous and splendid. Have you no desire to behold these wonders for yourself?"

"Not a little!" said I.

"But Martin, three months are nigh sped and Master

Penfeather not come, and according to his letter three quarters of this great treasure is yours."

"Why, then, my lady, I do freely bestow it on you."

"Nay, this have I taken already, because I needed it; look!" So saying she drew a comb from her hair and showed me how it was all fashioned of wrought gold and set with great gems, pearls and sapphires and rubies marvellous to see.

"'T is mighty handsome," quoth I, "and beyond price, I judge."

"And yet," said she, "I would rather have my wooden pin in its stead, for surely there was none like to it in all this world."

Hereupon, groping in my pocket, I brought out that three-pronged pin I had carved for her; beholding which, she uttered a little cry of glad surprise and, letting fall her golden comb, took the pin to turn it this way and that, viewing it as it had been the very wonder of the world rather than the poor thing it was.

"Why, Martin!" said she at last, "why, Martin! Where found you this?" So I told her; and though my words were lame and halting, I think she guessed somewhat of the agony of that hour for I felt her hand touch my shoulder like a caress.

"Death's shadow hath been over us of late, Martin," said she, "and hath made us wiser methinks."

"Death?" said I. "'T is mayhap but the beginning of a greater life wherein shall be no more partings, I pray."

"'T is a sweet thought, Martin!"

"And you have never feared death!"

"Aye, but I do, Martin — I do!" cried she. "I am grown craven these days, mayhap —"

"Yet you sought death."

"Because there was no other way, Martin. But when Death clutched at me from those black depths, I agonised for life."

"Is life then — become so — sweet to you, Damaris?"

"Yes, Martin!" answered she softly.

"Since when?" I questioned. "Since when?" But instead of answering she falls a-singing softly and keeping her back to me; thus I saw that she had set the pin back in her hair, whereat I grew all suddenly and beyond reason glad. Though indeed the thing accorded but ill with her fine gown, as I told her forthwith.

"Think you so, Martin?" said she gravely, but with a dimple in her cheek.

"I do! 'T is manifestly out of keeping with your 'broideries, your pleats, tags, lappets, pearl buttons, galloons and the rest on 't."

"'T would almost seem you do not like me thus?" said she, frowning down at her finery but with the dimple showing plainer than ever.

"Why, truly," said I, stooping to take up the jewelled comb where it lay, "I liked your ragged gown better."

"Because your own clothes are so worn and sorry, sir. 'T is time you had better; I must see to it —"

"Nay, never trouble!"

"'T will be joy!" said she sweetly, but setting her chin at me. "And then — good lack, your hair, Martin!"

"What of it?"

"All elf locks. And then, your beard!"

"What o' my beard?"

"So wild and shaggy! And 't is so completely out o' the mode."

"Mode?" said I, frowning.

"Mode, Martin. Your spade beard was, then came your dagger or stiletto and now —"

"Hum!" says I, "it may be your broadsword or halfpike for aught I care. But as to your gown —"

"Alas, poor thing! 'T will soon look worn and ragged as you can wish, Martin. I have already lost three pearl studs and should grieve for them were there not a coffer full of better that I wot of. Oh, Martin, when I think of all these wonders — these great diamonds, emeralds, sapphires, pearls and rubies — I do tingle!"

"And can these toys so please you?" said I.

"Yes!" cried she. "Yes, and so would they any other that was not a stock or a stone or — Martin Conisby, who is above such vanities!"

"Vanities indeed!" said I. "In this wilderness more especially."

"How if we should find the world again?"

"Hum!" said I. "But this powder and shot now —"

"Pho!" cried she and stamping her foot, turned her back on me. "Here am I yearning to show you all these hidden marvels, Martin, but I never will until you beg me — no, never! And now 't is time you took your medicine."

"What medicine?" I questioned, wondering.

"'T is a soothing draught I have decocted from some of my simples; it will make you sleep."

"But I have no mind to sleep!"

"'T is why you must drink your potion."

"Never in this world!" said I, mighty determined.

"Why, yes, you will, dear Martin," said she gently, but setting her dimpled chin at me. "I 'll go fetch it." And away she went forthwith and came presently back bearing an embossed cup (like unto a little porringer) and of gold curiously ornamented.

"Here is noble cup!" said I.

"In these secret caves, Martin, is nothing that is not beautiful. The walls are all hung with rich arras, the floors adorned with marvellous rugs and carpets. And there are many pictures excellent well painted. Pirate and wicked as he was, Black Bartlemy understood and loved beautiful things."

"Aye, he did so!" said I, scowling.

"And amongst these pictures is one of himself."

"How should you know this?"

"Because, were you shaven, Martin, this might pass for picture of you, though to be sure your expression is different — except when you scowl as you do now, sir. Come take your medicine like a good Martin!" And here she set the cup to my lips.

"No!" said I.

"Yes, Martin! 'T is sleep you need and sleep you shall have. For indeed I do long to hear you at work again and whistling. So drink it for my sake, Martin! Indeed, 't is none so very bitter!"

So in the end I swallowed the stuff to be done with it. And in a while (sure enough) I grew drowsy and, limping into the cave, stared to behold my bed no longer a heap of bracken but a real bed with sheets and pillows, such indeed as I had not slept in for many a long day. Thus, instead of throwing myself down all dressed, as I had been minded, I laid aside my rough clothes lest they soil this dainty gear and, getting into bed, joyed in the feel of these cool, white sheets and, closing my eyes, fell to dreamless slumber.

I awoke late next morning to find my clothes clean gone and others in their place; but garments these whose like I had never seen. For here were purple breeches be-laced and ribbanded at the knee and buttoning there with great gold buttons (six a side) and each set with a great pearl; a fine cambric shirt; a doublet cut in at the waist with gold-braided lappets; the sleeves slashed and very wide and turned up at the wrists with point lace, and this wondrous garment fastening in front with many gold buttons all set with goodly pearls; so that I judged this coat to be a very fortune in itself. Besides this, I found a great lace collar or falling band, a pair of silk stockings, shoes with gold buckles set with diamonds and a great penthouse of a hat adorned with a curling feather fastened by a diamond brooch; whiles hard by was an embroidered shoulder belt carrying a long rapier, its guards and quillons of wrought gold, its pommel flaming with great brilliants. Beholding all of which gauds and fopperies, I vowed I 'd none of them and, cowering beneath the sheets, fell to shouting and hallooing for my lady; but finding this vain, scowled at these garments instead. They were of a fashion such as I remembered my father had worn; and now as I gazed on them, a strange fancy took me to learn how I (that had gone so long half-naked and in rags)

might feel in such sumptuous apparel. So up I got and dressed forthwith and found this a matter of no small difficulty, what with the unfamiliar shape of these garments and their numberless points and buttons. Howbeit 't was done at last and now, coming without the cave, there was my lady upon her three-legged stool preparing breakfast. Beholding me she stared wide-eyed for a moment, then she rose, smiling roguishly, and sank down in a slow and gracious curtsey.

"Good morrow to your lordship," said she. "Your lordship called, I think, but I could not answer your lordship's shouts since I was busied preparing your lordship's breakfast."

Now beholding all the sweet and roguish witchery of her, the sun so bright and the world about us so joyous, what could I do but smile and, sweeping off my great hat, make her as deep and profound a reverence as ever was seen at Whitehall or Versailles.

"Madame," quoth I, "your ladyship's most humble and very obedient servant. I trust your ladyship hath breakfast ready, for of a truth my magnificence is mighty sharp set."

"Oh, Martin," cried she, clapping her hands, "I vow 't was most gallant! It needeth but for you to trim your hair and beard — no, I think I will have you clean-shaven, 't will mind me of the boyish Martin of years ago! Yes, you shall shave — "

"Shave!" quoth I, staring like any fool.

"Yes, Martin, I have all things ready. Come, it shall not take you long, we will breakfast when you are shaved and trimmed." So, willy-nilly, she brought me back to the cave, and presently came bearing a gold-mounted box wherein lay razors with soap and everything needful to a fine gentleman's toilet. Then she set before me a gold-framed mirror and, taking a pair of scissors at her bidding I began to clip the hair from my face but so bungled the business that she presently took the scissors and did it for me. Thereafter I shaved (awkwardly enough and

she mighty anxious lest I cut myself — the which I did!) and, having at last washed and dried my face, I stood all amazed to find myself so much younger-looking. Now, seeing how she stared at me and with rosy lips all a-quiver, I smiled, then wondered to behold her eyes suddenly a-brim with tears.

"Oh, Martin, you do look the same Martin, after all!" said she, and so away into the sunshine; yet when I presently joined her I found her blithe enough.

"Are you hungry, sir?"

"Ravenous, my lady!"

"Why, then, here we have broiled fish (caught by my ladyship), salt, Martin! Butter — churned by my ladyship — and — bread, Martin! Bread baked by my ladyship's own two hands."

"Oh, marvellous, sweet lady!" said I.

"And 'tis none so ill though I had no yeast, is it, Martin?"

"Delicious!" answered I, my mouth full.

And now, all our recent woes and sorrows clean forgotten, a right joyous meal had we; our hearts light as the sweet air that breathed around us, and untroubled as the placid ocean and broad serenity of heaven, with no dark shadow anywhere to warn us of those evils to come. Thus we ate and talked, finding joy in everything. Often my fingers must go to feel my smooth cheeks and chin, and she, catching me, must needs laugh and vow a smooth face suited me well and that I should be handsome were my nose another shape and my eyes a different colour. Thus (as I say) brooding sorrow seemed clean vanished from my world, so that my heart swelled with gratitude for that I should live to breathe the air she made sweet.

Breakfast done, I fetched my saw and, despite her remonstrances and my resplendent breeches, forthwith set about making us a cupboard; vowing I was well again, that I never felt better, etc. Hereupon, finding me set on it, she presently brought me the following, viz: An excellent new saw, divers chisels of goodly edge, a plane, a

hammer, an auger and an adze; the which rejoiced me greatly, more especially the adze, the same being an exceeding useful tool in skilled hands. All these she had brought from the secret store, and I mighty grateful therefor and told her so.

"Why, then, Martin," said she, "if your gratitude be real and true, you shall do somewhat for me — "

"What you will!" said I eagerly.

"Nay," she laughed, "'t is no more than this — keep you shaved — henceforth."

And so it was agreed.

CHAPTER XXXII

Of the Voice That Sang on Deliverance Sands

If clothes be the outward and visible (albeit silent) expression of a man, his tastes and certain attitudes of his mind, yet have they of themselves a mighty influence on their wearer, being, as it were, an inspiration to him in degree more or less.

And this is truth I will maintain, let say who will to the contrary, since 't is so my experience teacheth me.

Hitherto my ragged shirt, my rough leathern jerkin and open-kneed sailor's breeches had been a constant reminder of the poor desperate rogue I had become; my wild hair and shaggy beard evidences of slavedom. Thus I had been indeed what I had seemed in looks, — a rude, ungentle creature expectant of scorns and ill-usage and therefore very prone to fight and quarrel, harsh-tongued, bitter of speech and in all circumstances sullen, ungoverned and very desperate.

But now, seeing myself thus gently dight, my wild hair tamed by comb and scissors, there grew within me a new respect for my manhood, so that, little by little, those evils that slavery had wrought slipped from me. Thus, though I still laboured at my carpentry and such business as was to do, yet the fine linen rolled high above my scarred and knotted arm put me to the thought that I was no longer the poor, wild wretch full of despairing rage against Fate and her cruel dealings, but rather a man gently born and therefore one who must endure all things as uncomplainingly as might be, and one moreover who, to greater or less degree, was master of his own fate.

And now came Hope, that most blessed and beneficent

spirit that lifteth the fallen from the slough, that bindeth up the broken heart, that cheereth the sad and downcast and maketh the oft-defeated bold and courageous to attempt Fortune yet again.

Oh, thou that we call Hope, thou sweet, bright angel of God! Without thee life were an evil unendurable, with thee for companion gloomy Doubt, sullen Fear and dark Despair flee utterly away and we, bold-hearted, patient and undismayed by any dangers or difficulties, may realise our dreams at last. Oh, sweet, strong angel of God, with thee to companion us all things are possible!

Thus every morning came Hope to greet me on my waking and I, forgetting the futile past, began to look forward to a future more glorious than I ever dreamed; so I, from a sullen rogue full of black humours, grew to know again the joy of laughter and put off my ungracious speech and ways with my rough attire. Though how much the change thus wrought in me was the work of my sweet comrade, these pages, I do think, will show.

As for my lady she, very quick to mark this change, grew ever the more kind and trusting, sharing with me all her doubts and perplexities; thus, did some problem vex her, she must come to me, biting her pretty lips and her slender brows wrinkled, to ask my advice.

At this time (and at her suggestion) I builded a fireplace and oven within our third or inmost cave (that was by turns her larder, stillroom, dairy and kitchen) and with a chimney to carry off the smoke, the which I formed of clay and large pebbles, and found it answer very well. Thus, what with those things I contrived and others she brought from her treasure house (the secret whereof she kept mighty close) we lacked for nothing to our comfort, even as Adam had promised in his letter. Moreover I was very well armed, both for offence and defence for, one by one she brought me the following pieces, viz: A Spanish helmet inlaid with gold and very cumbersome; a back and breast of fine steel of proof; four wheel-lock arquebuses, curiously chased and gilded with shot and

powder for the same; three brace of pistols, gold-mounted and very accurate; and what with these, my sword, axe and trusty knife, I felt myself capable to drive away any should dare molest us, be he Indian, buccaneer or pirate, as I told her.

"Aye, but," said she, "whiles you fought for our lives, what must I be doing?"

"Lying secure within your secret treasure house."

"Never," says she, setting her chin at me. "Oh, never, Martin; since I am your comrade my place must be beside you."

"'T would but distress me and spoil my shooting."

"Why, then, my aim should be truer, Martin. Come now, teach me how to use gun and pistol."

So then and there I fetched a pistol and one of the arquebuses and showed her their manage, namely — how to hold them, to level, sight, etc. Next I taught her how to charge them, how to wad powder and then shot, lest the ball roll out of the barrel; how, having primed, she must be careful ever to close the pan against the priming being blown away, all of the which she was mighty quick to apprehend. Moreover, I took care to keep all my firearms cleaned and loaded, that I might be ready for any disturbers of our peace.

So the days sped, each with its meed of work but each full-charged of joy. And dear to me beyond expressing is the memory of these days whenas I, labouring with my new tools, had but to lift my head to behold my dear comrade (herself busy as I). Truly, how dear, how thrice-blessed the memory of it all. A memory this, indeed, that was to become for me sacred beyond all others; for now came Happiness with arms outstretched to me and I (poor, blind wretch) suffered it to plead in vain and pass me by, as you shall hear.

It was a night of splendour with a full moon uprising in majesty to fill the world with her soft radiance; a night very warm and still and we silent, I think because of the tender beauty of the night.

"Martin," said my companion softly at last, "here is another day sped—"

"Alas, and more 's the pity!" quoth I.

"Oh?" and she looked at me askance.

"Our days fly all too fast, Damaris; here is a time I fain would linger upon, an I might."

"It hath been a very wonderful time truly, Martin, and hath taught me very much. We are both the better for it, I think, and you—"

"What of me, comrade?" I questioned as she paused.

"You are grown so much gentler since your sickness, so much more my dear friend and companion."

"Why, 't is all your doing, Damaris."

"I am glad—oh, very glad!" said she almost in a whisper.

"Why, 't is you who have taught me to—to love all good, sweet things, to rule myself that I—I may some day, mayhap, be a little more worthy of—of—" Here, beginning to flounder, I came to sudden halt and casting about in my mind for a likely phrase, saw her regarding me, the dimple in her cheek, but her eyes all compassionate and ineffably tender.

"Dear man!" said she, and reached me her hand.

"Damaris," said I heavily, looking down at these slender fingers and yet not daring to kiss them lest my passion sweep me away, "you know that I do love you?"

"Yes, Martin."

"And that my love, be it what it may, is yet an honest love?"

"Yes, dear Martin."

Here was silence a while, she looking up at the moon, and I at her.

"I broke my oath to you once," said I, "nor will I swear again, but dear my lady, know this: though I do hunger and thirst for you, yet mine is such reverent love that should we live thus together long years—aye, until the end of our lives, I will school myself to patience and

wait ever upon your will. Though 'twill be hard!" said I 'twixt my teeth, thrilling to the sudden clasp of her fingers.

"But, Martin," said she softly, "how if our days together here should all suddenly end——"

"End?" cried I, starting. "Wherefore end? When? Why end?" And I trembled in a sick panic at the mere possibility. "End?" quoth I again. "Would you have an end?"

"No—ah, no!" said she, leaning to me that I could look down into her eyes.

"Doth this—oh, Damaris, can this mean that you are happy with me in this solitude—content—?"

"So happy, Martin, so content that I do fear lest it may all suddenly end and vanish like some loved dream."

"Damaris—oh, Damaris!" said I, kissing her sweet fingers. "Look now, there is question hath oft been on my lips, yet one I have not dared to ask."

"Ask me now, Martin."

"'T is this—could it—might it perchance be possible you should learn with time—mayhap—to love me a little? Nay, not a little, not gently nor with reason, but fiercely, mightily, beyond the cramping bounds of all reason?"

Now here she laughed, a small, sad laugh with no mirth in it, and leaned her brow against my arm as one very weary.

"Oh, foolish Martin!" she sighed. "How little you have seen, how little guessed—how little you know the real me! For I am a woman, Martin, as you are a man, and joy in it. All these months I have watched you growing back to your nobler self; I have seen you strive with yourself for my sake and gloried in your victories, though—sometimes I have—tempted you—just a little, Martin. Nay, wait, dear Martin. Ofttimes at night I have known you to steal forth and hearkened to your step going to and fro out in the dark, and getting to my knees have thanked God for you, Martin."

"'T was not all in vain, then!" said I hoarsely, bethinking me of the agony of those sleepless nights.

"Vain?" she cried. "Vain? 'T is for this I do honour you —"

"Honour — me?" said I, wincing.

"Above all men, Martin. 'T is for this I —"

"Wait!" said I, fronting her all shame-faced. "I do love you so greatly I would not have you dream me better than I am! So now must I tell you this: I stole to you once — at midnight — you were asleep, the moonlight all about you, and looked like an angel of God."

And now it was my turn to stare up at the moon whiles I waited miserably enough for her answer.

"And when you went away, Martin," said she at last, "when I heard you striding to and fro, out here beneath God's stars, I knew that yours was the greatest, noblest love in all the world."

"You — saw me?"

"Yes, Martin!"

"Yet your eyes were fast shut."

"Yes, but not — not all the time. And oh, Martin, dear, dear Martin, I saw your great, strong arms reach out to take me — but they did n't, they did n't because true love is ever greatly merciful! And your triumph was mine also, Martin! And so it is I love you — worship you, and needs must all my days."

And now we were on our feet, her hands in mine, eyes staring into eyes and never a word to speak.

"Is it true?" said I at last. "God, Damaris — is it true?"

"Seems it so wonderful, dear Martin? Why, this love of mine reacheth back through the years to Sir Martin, my little knight errant, and hath grown with the years till now it filleth me and the universe about me. Have you forgot 't was your picture hung opposite my bed at home, your sword I kept bright because it had been yours? And often, Martin, here on our dear island, I have wept sometimes for love of you because it pained me so! Nay,

wait, beloved, first let me speak, though I do yearn for your kisses! But this night is the greatest ever was or mayhap ever shall be, and we, alone here in the wild, do lie beyond all human laws soever save those of our great love — And oh, Martin, you — you do love me?"

Now when I would have answered I could not, so I sank to my knees and, stooping ere she knew, clasped and kissed the pretty feet of her.

"No, Martin — beloved, ah no!" cried she as it were pain to her, and kneeling before me, set her soft arms about my neck. "Martin," said she, "as we kneel thus in this wilderness alone with God, here and now, before your lips touch mine, so great and trusting is my love I ask of you no pledge but this: Swear now in God's sight to renounce and put away all thought of vengeance now and for ever; swear this, Martin!"

Now I, all bemused by words so unexpected, all dazzled as it were by the pleading, passionate beauty of her, closed my eyes that I might think.

"Give me until to-morrow —" I groaned.

"'T will be too late! Choose now, Martin."

"Let me think —"

"'T is no time for thought! Choose, Martin! This hour shall never come again, so Martin — speak now or —"

The words died on her lip, her eyes opened in sudden dreadful amaze, and thus we remained, kneeling rigid in each other's arms, for, away across Deliverance, deep and full and clear, a voice was singing:

> There be two at the fore
> At the main be three more,
> Dead men that swing all of a row;
> Here 's fine dainty meat
> For the fishes to eat:
> Black Bartlemy — Bartlemy, ho!

Long after the singing had died away I (like one dazed) could think of nought but this accursed song,

these words the which had haunted my sick bed and methought no more than the outcome of my own fevered imagination; thus my mind running on this and very full of troubled perplexity, I suffered my lady to bring me within our refuge, but with my ears on the stretch as expectant to hear again that strange, deep voice sing these words I had heard chaunted by a dead man in my dreams.

Being come within our third cave (or kitchen) my lady showed me a small cord that dangled in certain shadowy corner and, pulling on this cord, down fell a rope ladder and hangs suspended; and I knew this for Adam's "ladder of cords" whereby he had been wont to mount into his fourth (and secret) cavern, as mentioned in his chronicle.

"Here lieth safety, Martin," said my lady, "for as Master Penfeather writes in his journal, 'one resolute man lying upon the hidden ledge' (up yonder) 'may withstand a whole army so long as his shot last.' And you are very resolute and so am I!"

"True!" said I. "True!" Yet, even as I spake, stood all tense and rigid, straining my ears to catch again the words of this hateful song. But now my dear lady caught my hand and, peering up at me in my dimness, presently drew me into the outer cave where the moon made a glory.

"Oh, Martin!" said she, looking up at me with troubled eyes. "Dear Martin, what is it?"

"Aye — what?" quoth I, wiping sweat from me. "God knoweth! But you heard? That song? The words —"

"I heard a man singing, Martin. But what of it — we are safe here! Ah — why are you so strange?"

"Damaris," said I, joying in the comfort of her soft, strong arms about me, "dear love of mine, here is thing beyond my understanding, for these were words I dreamed sung to me by a dead man — the man Humphrey — out beyond the reef —"

"Nay, but dear Martin, this was a real voice. 'T is some shipwrecked mariner belike, some castaway —"

"Aye, but did you — mark these words, Damaris?"

"Nay — oh, my dear, how should I — at such a moment!"

"They were all — of Black Bartlemy! And what should this mean, think you?"

"Nay, dear love, never heed!" said she, clasping me the closer.

"Aye, but I must, Damaris, for — in a while this singing shall come again, mayhap, and — if it doth — I know what 't will be!"

"Oh, Martin — Martin, what do you mean?"

"I mean 't will be about the poor Spanish lady," said I and, catching up my belt where it hung, I buckled it about me.

"Ah — what would you do, Martin?"

"I 'm for Deliverance —"

"Then will I come also —"

"No!" said I, catching her in fierce arms. "No! You are mine henceforth and more precious than life to me. So must you bide here — I charge you by our love. For look now, 't is in my mind Tressady and his pirates are upon us at last, those same rogues that dogged the *Faithfull Friend* over seas. Howbeit, I must find out who or what it is that sings this hateful —"

I stopped, all at once, for the voice was come again, nearer, louder than before, and singing the very words I had been hearkening for and dreading to hear:

> "There 's a fine Spanish dame,
> And Joanna 's her name,
> Shall follow wherever ye go;
> 'Till your black heart shall feel
> Your own cursed steel:
> Black Bartlemy — Bartlemy, ho!"

"You heard!" said I, clapping hand on knife. "You heard?"

"Yes — yes!" she whispered, her embrace tightening

until I might feel her soft body all a-tremble against mine. "But you are safe — here, Martin!"

"So safe," said I, "that needs must I go and find out this thing; nay, never fear, beloved; life hath become so infinite precious that I shall be a very coward — a craven for your sake. Here shall be no fighting, Damaris, but go I must. Meanwhile do you wait me in the secret cave and let down the ladder only to my whistle."

But now, and lying all a-tremble in my embrace, she brake into passionate weeping, and I powerless to comfort her.

"Farewell Happiness!" she sobbed. "Only Martin, dear Martin, whatsoever may chance, know and remember always that I loved and shall love you to the end of time!"

Then (and all suddenly) she was her sweet, calm self again and, bringing me my chain shirt, insisted I must don it there and then beneath my fine doublet, the which (to please her) I did. Then she brought me one of the arquebuses, but this I put by as too cumbersome, taking one of the pistols in its stead. So, armed with this, together with my hatchet and trusty knife, I stepped from the cave and she beside me. And now I saw she had dried her tears, and the hand clasping mine was firm and resolute, so that my love and wonder grew.

"Damaris," I cried, casting me on my knees before her, "O God, how I do love thee!" And, kneeling thus, I clasped her slender loveliness, kissing the robes that covered her; and so, rising to my feet I hasted away. Yet in a little I turned to see her watching me but with hands clasped as one in prayer. Now, beholding her thus, I was seized of a sudden great desire to go back to give her that promise and swear that oath she sought of me, viz: that I would forego my vengeance and all thought thereof, forgetting past wrongs in the wonder of her love. But, even as I stood hesitating, she waved her hand in farewell and was gone into the cave.

CHAPTER XXXIII

Of the Death-Dance of the Silver Woman

A small wind had sprung up that came in fitful gusts and with sound very mournful and desolate, but the moon was wonderfully bright and, though I went cautiously, my hand on the butt of the pistol in my girdle, yet ever and always at the back of my mind was an infinitude of joy by reason of my dear lady's love for me and the wonder of it.

I chose me a devious course, avoiding the white sands of Deliverance Beach, trending towards that fatal cleft hard by Bartlemy's tree (the which we had come to call Skeleton Cove) though why I must go thither I knew no more then than I do now.

Thus went I (my eyes and ears on the stretch) pondering what manner of man this should be who sang words the which had so haunted my sick dreams; more than once I stopped to stare round about upon the wide expanse of ocean, dreading and half expecting to behold the loom of that black craft which had dogged us over seas.

Full of these disquieting thoughts, I reached the cove and began to descend the steep side, following goat tracks long grown familiar. The place hereabouts was honeycombed with small caves and with ledges screened by bushes and tangled vines; and here, well hid from observation, I paused to look about me. But (and all in a moment) I was down on my knees, for from somewhere close by came the sharp snapping of a dried stick beneath a stealthy foot.

Very still I waited, every nerve a-tingle, and then, forth into the moonlight, sudden and silent as death, a man crept; and verily if ever murderous death stood in human

shape it was before me now. The man stood half-crouching, his head twisted back over his shoulder as watching one who followed; beneath the vivid scarf that swathed his temples was a shock of red hair and upon his cheek the sweat was glittering; then he turned his head, and I knew him for the man Red Andy, that same I had fought with aboard ship. For a long moment he stood thus, staring back ever and anon across Deliverance, and so came creeping into the shadow of the cliff, and I saw the moon glint on the barrel of the long pistol he clutched, as, sinking down behind a great boulder, he waited there upon his knees.

Now suddenly as I lay there watching Red Andy's murderous figure and strung for swift action I started, and (albeit the night was very warm) felt a chill pass over me as, loud and clear upon the stilly air, rose again that full, deep voice singing hard by upon Deliverance:

"Go seek ye women everywhere,
North, South, lads, East or West,
Let 'em be dark, let 'em be fair
My Silver Woman's best;
Blow high, blow low,
Where'er ye go
The Silver Woman's best
Aha!
My Silver Woman's best!"

Thus sang the unknown who, all unwitting, was coming to his death; sudden as it came the voice was hushed, and nought to hear save the hiss and murmur of the surge, and I saw the man Andy stir restlessly as minute after minute dragged by.

The rock where he crouched lay at the mouth of this cove towards Deliverance, it being one of many that lay piled thereabout. Now chancing to look towards these scattered rocks (and for no reason in the world) I saw a thing that held me as it were spellbound and this a small enough thing in itself,—a sharp, glittering thing that

seemed fast caught in a fissure of one of those rocks, — and I knew it for a steel hook; but even as I stared at it the thing was gone and so noiselessly that I half-doubted if I had seen it or no. But — out from the shadow of this rock flashed something that whirled, glittering as it flew, and Red Andy, starting up from his knees, was shaken by a fit of strange and awful coughing and came stumbling forward so that I could see his chin and breast bedabbled with the blood that spurted from his gaping mouth. All at once he sank to his knees and thence to his face, spreading his arms wide like one very weary, but with the moonlight flashing back from that which stood upright betwixt his shoulder blades. And thus I saw again the silver haft of the dagger that was shaped like to a woman, saw this silver woman dance and leap, glittering, ere it grew terribly still.

Then came Roger Tressady from the shadows and, stooping, turned up the dead face to the moon and tapped it gently with his shining hook. And now, whipping out his dagger, he bent to wipe it upon the dead man's shirt but checked suddenly as a pebble started beneath my foot and stooped thus he glared up beneath thick brows as I rose up with pistol levelled and the moon bright upon my face; whereupon he leaped backwards, uttering a choking cry.

"Black Bartlemy — by God!" he gasped and let fall his reeking dagger upon the sand; and so we stood staring on each other and with the dead man sprawling betwixt us.

For maybe a full minute we fronted each other unmoving and with never a word; and thus at last I beheld this man Tressady.

A tall, lusty fellow, square of face and with pale eyes beneath a jut of shaggy brow. A vivid neckerchief was twisted about his head, and in his hairy ears swung great gold rings; his powerful right hand was clenched to knotted fist; in place of his left glittered that deadly hook.

"Sink me!" he said at last, drawing clenched fist across his brow. "Sink me, but ye gave me a turn, my

lord! Took ye for a ghost, I did, the ghost of a shipmate o' mine, one as do lie buried yonder, nought but poor bones — aye, rotten bones — as this will be soon!" Here he spurned the dead man with his foot. "'T is black rogue this, my lord, one as would ha' made worm's-meat o' poor Tressady — aye, a lump o' murdered clay like my shipmate Bartlemy yonder — but for this Silver Woman o' mine!" Here he stooped for the dagger and, having cleaned it in the sand, held it towards me upon his open palm. "Aha, here's woman hath never failed me yet! She's faithful and true, friend, faithful and true, this Silver Woman o' mine. But 't is an ill world, my master, and full o' bloody rogues like this sly dog as stole ashore to murder me — the fool! Oh, 't is a black and bloody world —"

"So it is!" quoth I, 'twixt shut teeth. "And all the worse for the likes o' you, Roger Tressady!"

"So ho — he knoweth my name then!" says Tressady, rubbing shaven chin with silver dagger hilt and viewing me with his pale, keen gaze. "But do I know him now — do I?"

"I know you for pirate and damned murderer, Roger Tressady; and so shall you quit this island this very hour or else stay here to rot along with Bartlemy and Red Andy!"

Now at this (and all careless of my pistol) he drew a slow pace nearer, great head outthrust, peering.

"Why," said he at last, "why — bleed me! If — if it aren't — aye 't is — Martin! Why, for sure 't is my bonnie Marty as saved my skin time and again aboard the *Faithfull Friend!* Though ye go mighty fine, lad, mighty fine! But good luck t' ye and a fair wind, say I!" And thrusting the dagger into his girdle, he nodded mighty affable. "But look 'ee now, Marty, here's me wishing ye well and you wi' a barker in your fist; 't is no fashion to greet a shipmate, I'm thinking —"

"Enough words!" said I, stepping up to him. "Do you go — alive, or stay here dead — which?"

"Split me!" said he, never stirring. "But 't is small choice you offer, Marty—"

"My name 's Martin!"

"And a curst good name too, Marty. But I 've no mind to be worm's-meat yet-a-while—no! Come, what 's your quarrel wi' me? First Andy would murder me and now 't is you—why for? Here 's me wi' a heart o' gold t' cherish a friend and never a friend t' cherish! What 's your quarrel lad, what?"

"Quarrel enough, what with your drugging me and murder aboard ship—"

"Avast, lad! Here 's unchancy talk, ill and unmannered!"

"You murdered divers men aboard the *Faithfull Friend*—"

"Only three, Marty, only three—poor souls! Though yours is a foul word for 't. I took 'em off, lad, took 'em off as a matter o' policy. I 've never took off any yet as I was n't forced to by circumstance. Look 'ee, there 's men in this world born to be took off by some one or other, and they always come a-drifting across my hawse and get took off accordingly; but don't blame me, lad, don't. And as for a-drugging of ye, Marty, true again! But love me! What was I to do? But I did n't take you off, lad, no, nor never shall, unless you and policy force me so to do. I 'm no murderer born—like Adam—curse him! Clap me alongside Adam and I 'm a turtle dove, a babe for innocence and a lamb for meekness! There never was such a murderer born into this wicked world as Adam Penfeather, with a curse! 'T was he as murdered Black Bartlemy and nine sweet, bright lads arter him, murdered 'em here, one by one, and wi' a parchment rove about the neck of each poor corpse, Marty. 'T was he as drove their mates out to sea to perish in a leaky boat; ask Abnegation Mings! 'T was him nigh murdered me more than once, aye me, lad, as can't *be* killed, according to the prophecy of the poor mad soul aboard the old *Delight*. Why Adam, curse him, has murdered more men than you have years.

And talking of him, how cometh it you are n't blown t' hell along wi' him and the rest? "

"Do you tell me Adam is dead?"

"Blown up aboard the *Faithfull Friend*, lad. Just after we run her aboard and grappled; aye, blew up she did and nigh took us wi' her. Aha, but Adam's dead at last, curse him! Unless he can't be killed either, unless he is — "

Here, and all at once, he turned to stare away across Deliverance, then shrinking, cowered towards me as in sudden terror, stabbing at the empty air with his glittering hook:

"Ha — what 's yon!" cried he in awful voice; and I, turning whither his glaring eyes stared (and half-dreading to behold my lady), had the pistol wrenched from my hold and the muzzle under my ear all in a moment; and stood scowling and defenceless like the vast fool I was.

"Split me!" said he, tapping me gently with his hook. "Oh, blind me if I thought ye such a lubberly fool! So old a trick, Marty! Now look 'ee, were I a murderer and loved it — like Adam, curse him, I should pull trigger! But being Roger Tressady wi' a heart o' gold, I say sit down, lad, sit down and let us talk, friend, let us talk. Come — sit down! Never mind Andy, he shan't trouble us!" So with the pistol at my ear we sat down side by side and the dead man sprawling at our feet.

"Now first, Marty lad, how come ye here alone on Bartlemy's island — how?"

But sitting thus, chin on fist, I stared down at Red Andy's stiffening body silent as he, I being too full of fierce anger and bitter scorn of my folly for speech.

"Come, come, Marty, be sociable!" says Tressady, tapping my cheek with the pistol muzzle. "Was it Penfeather sent ye hither t' give an eye to — the treasure? Was it?"

"Aye!"

"'T would be the night he made the crew drunk and spoiled my plans. Ha, 't was like him — a cunning rogue! But for this I 'd have had the ship and him and the

treasure. Oh, a right cunning, fierce rogue was Adam and none to match him but me."

"But he nearly did for you once!" says I bitterly. "And he such a small, timid man!"

"Look 'ee, Martin, when Adam grows timid, 't is time for your bold, desperate fellows to beware! But he 's dead at last, though I 'd ha' felt more comfort, aye, I 'd ha' took it kinder, had he been took off by my Silver Woman — or this!" Here he thrust his hook before my eyes. "It ain't a pretty thing, Martin, not pretty, no — but 't is useful at all times and serves to shepherd my lambs wi' now and then; 't is likewise a mighty persuading argument, but, and best of all — 't is sure, lad, sure. So I 'd ha' took it kinder had I watched him go off on this, lad, this. My hook for my enemies and for my friends a heart o' gold! And, talking o' gold, Marty, what — what o' Bartlemy's Treasure?"

"You are heartily welcome to it, for all me."

"Why, that's spoke manly and like a friend, rot me but it is! And now where might it lie, Marty, where?"

"I 've no idea."

"What, ha'n't ye found it, lad?"

"No!"

"Not even — seen it, then?"

"No!"

"Why, think o' that now, think o' that! And you wi' — a fortun' o' pearls on you, Marty. These pearl studs and buttons, lad. Pearls — ha, pearls was meat and drink to Bartlemy. And here 's you wi' pearls I 've seen on Bartlemy many a time. And yet you ha'n't found the treasure, says you. If I was a passionate man, Marty, I should call ye a liar, says I. Howsoever, what I do say is — as you 've forgot, and very right and proper. But we 'm friends, you and me, so far, and so, 'twixt friends, I ask you to think again until you remember and to think hard, lad, hard."

Now as I sat (and miserably enough) staring down at my jewelled buttons that seemed to leer up at me like so

many small, malevolent eyes, upon the air rose a distant stir that grew and grew to sound of voices with the creak and rumble of oars.

"Here come my lambs at last, Marty, and among 'em some o' the lads as sailed with Bartlemy aboard the *Delight*. There's Sam Spraggons for one — Smiling Sam as you'll mind aboard the *Faithfull Friend*. Now the Smiler knoweth many and divers methods of persuasion, Marty lad, tricks learned of the Indians as shall persuade a man to anything in this world. But first, seeing 't is you, Martin, as played 'bonnet' to me and saved my life aboard ship, though all unknowing, here's my offer; show me how to come by Bartlemy's Treasure as is mine — mine by rights; let me get my hands on to it and none the wiser, and there shall be share for you, Marty lad, share for you. Otherwise I must let Sam try to persuade you to remember where it lieth. Come, what d'ye say?"

"What — you'll torture me then?"

"If I must, friend, if I must. 'T is left for you to say."

"Why, then, 't will be labour in vain, Tressady, for I swear I know nought of this treasure — "

"Sit still, lad, sit still!" said he, clapping the pistol to my ear again. "Though a fool in many ways, Marty, you're proper enough man to look at, and 't will be pity to cripple ye! Aye, there won't be much left when Sam is done wi' you, more's the pity."

Hereupon he hailed loudly and was answered from the lagoon and, glancing thither, I saw two boats crowded with men pulling for the beach.

"A wildish company, Martin, desperate fellows as ever roved the main, as I do love no more than they love me. So say the word and we'll share Black Bartlemy's Treasure betwixt us, just you and me, lad, me and you! Come, what's your will?" But shaking my head (and hopelessly enough), I set my teeth and watched the coming of my tormentors.

And foremost was a short, plump, bright-eyed man who

lacked an ear, and at his elbows two others, the one a lank rogue with a patch over one eye, the third a tall, hairy fellow.

And observing them as they came, I knew them for those same three rogues I had fought with in the hedge tavern beside Pembury Hill on that night I had first seen my dear lady. Hard upon their heels came a riotous company variously armed and accoutred, who forthwith thronged upon me, pushing and jostling for sight of me, desecrating the quiet night with their hoarse and clamourous ribaldry. Unlovely fellows indeed and clad in garments of every shape and cut, from stained homespun and tattered shirts to velvet coats be-laced and gold-braided; and beholding this tarnished and sordid finery, these clothes looted from sinking ships and blazing towns, I wondered vaguely what had become of their late owners.

At gesture from Tressady I was dragged to my feet and my arms jerked, twisted and bound before me cross-wise and so stood, helpless and in much painful discomfort, whiles Tressady harangued his fellows, tapping me gently with his hook.

"Look 'ee, my bullies," quoth he, "I promised ye gold a-plenty, and here, somewhere on this island, it lieth waiting to be found. It needeth but for this fool Martin here, as some o' you will mind for Adam Penfeather's comrade, with a curse, it needeth but for him to speak, I say, and in that same hour each one o' you may fill your clutch wi' more treasure than ever came out o' Eldorado or Manoa. So speak he must and shall — eh, bullies, eh?"

"Aye, aye, Cap'n!" they roared, pressing upon me with a shaking of fists and glitter of eager steel.

"Twist his thumbs, Cap'n!" cried one.

"Slit his nose!" roared another.

"Trim his y'eres!" cried a third. But Tressady silenced them with a flourish of his hook.

"Hark 'ee, lads!" said he. "You all mean well, but you 're bunglers; here 's a little delicate matter as none can handle like the Smiler. There 's none like Sam can

make a man give tongue! Pass the word for Smiling Sam! Step forward, Sammy."

Hereupon cometh the great, fat fellow Spraggons who had been bo's'n's mate aboard the *Faithfull Friend,* forcing his way with vicious elbows and mighty anxious to come at me.

"Oh, love my limbs!" cried he in his high-pitched voice and blinking his hairless lids at me. "Oh, cherish my guts; leave him to me, Cap'n! Sam 's the lad to make this yer cock crow. See now — a good, sharp knife 'neath the finger or toenails — drew slow, mates, slow! Or a hot iron close agen his eyes is good. Or boiling water poured in his yeres might serve. Then — aha, Cap'n! I know a dainty little trick, a small cord, d' ye see, twisted athwart his head just a-low the brows, twisted and twisted — as shall start his eyes out right pretty to see. I mind too as Lollonais had a trick o' bursting a man's guts wi' water —"

"Bring him to the beach yonder!" says Tressady, watching me ever with his pale eyes. "There shall be more room for 't yonder!"

So they haled me along betwixt them and with huge merriment; but scarce were we out of the cove and hard beside Bartlemy's tree than I started to the vicious prick of a knife and, whirling about despite the fierce hands that sought to hold me, I saw Smiling Sam about to stab me again. But now, as I strove with my reeling captors, was a flicker of vicious steel as Tressady sprang and, whipping his hook beneath the great fellow's belt, whirled Smiling Sam from his feet, despite his prodigious weight, and forthwith trampled upon him.

"So-ho, my merry lad," quoth Tressady, glaring down into Smiling Sam's convulsed face. "And must ye be at it afore I give the word? Who 's captain here — who? Come, speak up, my roaring boy!" And he thrust his hook beneath the Smiler's great, flabby chin.

"Mercy, Cap'n — mercy!" cried Spraggons, his high-pitched voice rising to a pitiful squeal. "Not the hook, Cap'n — oh, Lord love me — not the hook!"

"Hook? And why not, Sam, why not? 'T is sharp and clean and quick and hath done the business o' nicer rogues than you, bully, aye and better, Sam, better — "

"Oh, Cap'n — for God's sake — "

"Who 're you to call on God so glib, Sammy? 'T is marvel He don't strike you blind, lad. Or there 's your innards, Sam, here 's that may whip out your liver, lad — So!" I saw the glitter of the hook, heard Smiling Sam's gasping scream as the steel bit into him, and then Tressady was on his feet, smiling round upon his awed and silent company.

"Look 'ee, bullies!" said he, pointing to the Smiler's inanimate form. "Here 's poor Sam all swounded away at touch o' my hook like any woman — and him my bo's'n! Pshaw! I want a man!" Here he stooped and, wrenching the silver pipe from Smiling Sam's fat throat, stared from one shuffling rogue to another. "Step forward, Abner," said he at last. "Come, you 'll do — you 're a prime sailorman. You 're my bo's'n henceforth."

But now Smiling Sam, awaking from his swoon, moaned feebly and sat up.

"Not the hook, Cap'n!" he wailed. "Oh, not that — "

"No, Smiler, no; I keep it for better men. Disobey me again and I 'll drownd ye in a puddle. And now up wi' you, Sammy, up wi' you and stand by to teach Martin here how to talk."

"Aye, aye, Cap'n — aye, aye!" says the gross fellow, rising nimbly enough, whiles his comrades closed about us expectant, and, glancing from me to Tressady where he had seated himself on a boulder. "Here will do!" said he, pointing to a brilliant strip of moonlit sand midway betwixt the shadows of the cliff and Black Bartlemy's tree. "On his back, hearties, and grapple him fast; he 's strong wellnigh as I am. Now his hand, Smiler, his right hand."

"Aye, aye, Cap'n!" quoth the fellow, kneeling above me where I lay helpless. "Will I cut it adrift — slow like?" And as he flourished his knife, I saw a trickle of

saliva at the corners of his great, loose mouth. "Off at the wrist, Cap'n, or fingers first?"

"No, fool! His thumb-nail first — try that!"

Sweating and with every nerve a-quiver, I watched that cruel knife, holding my breath in expectation of the coming agony, and then — from the black gloom of the cliff beyond burst a sudden echoing roar, I heard the whine of a bullet, and immediately all was confusion and uproar, shouts of dismay and a wild rush for shelter from this sudden attack. But as I struggled to my knees, Tressady's great hand gripped my throat and, dragging me behind a boulder, he pinned me there.

"Stand by, lads!" he roared. "Level at the cliff yonder but let no man pull trigger! Wait till they fire again and mark the flash!"

Helpless in my bonds and crushed beneath Tressady's knee, I heard a stir and rustle to right and left of me, the click of cocking triggers and thereafter — silence. And marking the gleam of pistol and musket barrel, I fell to an agony of dread, well knowing whence that merciful shot had come. For mayhap five minutes nought was to hear save the rustle of stealthy arm or leg and the sound of heavy breathing, until at length one spoke, low-voiced:

"What now, Captain? Us can't bide here all night."

"How many are we, Purdy?"

"Thirty and nine, Captain."

"Then do you take ten and scale the starboard cliff and you Abner with other ten take the cliff to larboard. I'll bide here wi' the rest, and so we'll have 'em — "

"Them cliffs be perilous high, Cap'n!"

"My hook is more perilous, Tom Day! Off wi' you, ye dogs, or I'll show ye a liver yet and be — "

He stopped all at once as, faint at first yet most dreadful to hear, there rose a man's cry, chilling the flesh with horror, a cry that waxed and swelled louder and louder to a hideous screaming that shrilled upon the night and, sinking to an awful bubbling murmur, was gone.

Up sprang Tressady to stare away across Deliverance

whence this dreadful cry had come, and I saw his hook tap-tapping at his great chin; then beyond these shining sands was the thunderous roar of a great gun, a furious rattle of small arms that echoed and reëchoed near and far, and thereafter single shots in rapid succession. Hereupon rose shouts and cries of dismay.

"Lord love us, we 'm beset! Oh, Cap'n, we be took fore and aft. What shall us do, Cap'n? Yon was a gun. What o' the ship, Cap'n — what o' the ship?"

"Yonder — look yonder! Who comes?" cried Tressady, pointing towards Deliverance Beach with his glittering hook.

Twisting my head as I lay, I looked whither he pointed and saw one that ran towards us, yet in mighty strange fashion, reeling in wide zigzags like a drunken man; and sometimes he checked only to come on again, and sometimes he fell only to struggle up.

"By God — it 's Abnegation!" cried Tressady. "'T is my comrade Mings! Look to the prisoner, ye dogs — you Tom Purdy! I 'm for Abnegation!" And off he went at a run. At his going was mighty talk and discussion what they should do, some men being for stealing away in the boats, others for taking to the woods, and all clean forgetting me where I lay. But suddenly they fell silent all, for Abnegation was hailing feebly and was come so nigh that we might see him, his face all bloody, his knees bending under him with weakness as he stumbled on. Suddenly, beholding Tressady, he stopped and hailed him in wild, gasping voice:

"Roger — oh, Roger! The devil 's aboard us, Roger — Penfeather 's on us — Penfeather 's took the ship — I 'm all that 's left alive! They killed Sol first — did ye — hear him die, Roger? Oh, did ye hear — "

I saw him fall and Tressady run to lift him, and watched these pirate rogues as, with oaths and cries of dismay, they hasted thither to throng about the two; then, rolling into the nearest shadow I struggled to my feet and found myself beneath the spreading branches of Bartlemy's tree.

And now, as I strove desperately against the rope that bit into the flesh of me, I felt the rope fall away, felt two soft arms close about me, and a soft breath on my cheek.

"Martin — oh, thank God!" Turning, I caught my dear, brave lady to my heart. Heedless of aught else in the world beside, I clasped her in my aching arms and kissed her until she stayed me and showing me where stood our enemies, a wild disordered company, took my hand and begun to run. Reaching the cliff, we climbed together nor stayed until she had brought me to a little cave where lay an arquebus together with bandoliers. "I tried to reload it, dear Martin, but 't was vain — my poor, silly hands shook so. For oh, my dear, I — heard them — saw them and — thought I should run mad — oh, Martin my love!"

So now whiles I loaded the arquebus, I told her as well as I might something of what I thought concerning her brave spirit, of my undying love for her, though in fashion very lame and halting. Thereafter, the weapon being ready, I placed it near and sitting within the gloom of this little cave I took my love into my arms, her dear head pillowed on my breast, and kissed the tremors from her sweet mouth and the horror from her eyes. And thus with her arms about my neck and her soft, smooth cheek against mine, we waited for what was to be.

CHAPTER XXXIV

Penfeather Reappears

In the shadow of the cliff below our hiding place crept divers of these pirate rogues and, crouching there cheek by jowl, fell to a hoarse mutter of talk, yet all too low for us to catch; but presently there brake out a voice high-pitched, the which I knew for that of Smiling Sam.

"We 'm done, lads, I tell ye. Oh, love my lights — we 'm done! 'T is the end o' we since Penfeather hath took the ship — and here 's us shall lie marooned to perish o' plagues, or Indian-savages, or hunger unless, lads, unless — "

"Unless what, Smiler?" questioned one eagerly.

"Unless we 'm up and doing. Penfeather do lack for men; Mings says he counted but ten at most when they boarded him! Well, mates — what d' ye say?"

"Ha, d' ye mean fight, Smiler? Fall on 'em by surprise and recapture the ship — ha?"

"Oh, bless my guts — no! Penfeather are n't to be caught so — not him! He 'll ha' warped out from the anchorage by this! But he be short-handed to work the vessel overseas; 't is a-seekin' o' likely lads and prime sailormen is Penfeather, and we sits on these y'ere sands. Well, mates, on these y'ere sands we be, but what 's to keep us on these y'ere sands? The boats lie yonder! Well?"

"Where be you heading off now, Smiler? Where 's the wind? Talk plain!"

"Why, look 'ee all, if Penfeather wants men, as wants 'em he doth, what 's to stay or let us from rowing out to Penfeather soft and quiet and 'listing ourselves along of

Penfeather and watch our chance t' heave Penfeather overboard and go a-roving on our own account? Well?"

At this was sudden silence, and thereafter a fierce mutter of whispering lost all at once in the clatter of arms and breathless scuffling as they scrambled to their feet; for there, within a yard of them, stood Tressady, hand grasping the dagger in his belt, his glittering hook tapping softly at his great chin as he stared from one to other of them.

"Ha, my pretty lambs!" said he, coming a pace nearer. "Will ye skulk then; will ye skulk with your fools' heads together? What now; mutiny is it, mutiny? And what 's come o' my prisoner, Martin; I don't spy him hereabouts?"

Now at this they shuffled, staring about and upon each other and (as I think) missed me for the first time.

"You, Tom Purdy, step forward — so! Now where 's the prisoner as I set i' your charge; where, my merry bird, where?"

The fellow shrank away, muttering some sullen rejoinder that ended in a choking scream as Tressady sprang. Then I (knowing what was toward) clasped my lady to me, covering her ears that she might not hear those ghastly bubbling groans, yet felt her sweet body shaking with the horror that shook me.

"So — there 's an end — o' Tom Purdy, my bullies!" gasped Tressady, stooping to clean his hook in the sand. "And I did it — look 'ee, because he failed me once, d' ye see! Who 'll be next? Who 's for mutiny — you Sammy, you — ha?"

"No — no, Cap'n!" piped Smiling Sam. "Us do be but contriving o' ways and means, seein' as Penfeather do ha' took our ship, curse him!"

"And what though he has? 'T is we have the island, and 't is on this island lieth Black Bartlemy's Treasure, and 't is the treasure we 're after! As to ways and means, here we be thirty and eight to Penfeather's fourteen, and in a little 't will be dark and the guns shan't serve 'em and

them — aha, look yonder! The fools be coming into our very clutches! To cover, lads, and look to your primings and wait my word."

Now glancing whither he pointed, I saw, above the adjacent headland, the tapering spars of a ship. Slowly she hove into view, bolt-sprit, forecastle, waist and poop, until she was plain to view, and I knew her for that same black ship that fouled us in Deptford Pool. She was standing in for the island under her lower courses only, although the wind was very light, but on she came, and very slowly, until she was so near that I might see the very muzzles of her guns. Suddenly, with a cheery yo-ho-ing, her yards were braced round, her anchor was let go, and she brought to opposite Skeleton Cove and within fair pistol-shot.

Now glancing below, I saw Tressady stand alone and with Abnegation Mings huddled at his feet, but in the gloom of the cave and to right and left, in every patch of shadow and behind every bush and rock, was the glimmer of pistol or musket barrel, and all levelled in the one direction.

Presently up to the lofty poop of the ship clambered a short, squat man in marvellous wide breeches and a great cutlass on hip, who clapping speaking-trumpet to mouth, roared amain:

"Ahoy the shore! We be short-handed. Now what rogues o' ye will turn honest mariners and 'list aboard us for England? Who 's for a free pardon and Old England?"

Hereupon, from bush and shadow and rock, I heard a whisper, a murmur, and the word "England" oft repeated.

Tressady heard it also and, stepping forward, he drew a long furrow in the sand with the toe of his shoe.

"Look 'ee, my hearty boys," said he, pointing to this furrow with his hook, "the first man as setteth foot athwart this line I send to hell-fire along o' Tom Purdy yonder!"

"Ahoy the shore!" roared Godby louder than ever.

"Who 's for an honest life, a free pardon and a share in Black Bartlemy's Treasure — or shall it be a broadside? Here be every gun full charged wi' musket balls — and 't is point-blank range! Which shall it be?"

Once again rose a murmer that swelled to an angry muttering, and I saw Smiling Sam come creeping from the shadow of the cave.

"Oh, Cap'n," he piped, "'t is plaguy desperate business; here 's some on us like to be bloody corpses — but I 'm wi' you, Cap'n Roger, whether or no; 't is me to your back!"

"To my back, Sammy? Why so you shall, lad, so you shall, but I 'll ha' your pistols first, Smiler — so!" And whipping the weapons from the great fellow's belt, Tressady gave them to Abnegation Mings where he lay in the shelter of a rock and, sitting down, crossed his long legs and cocked an eye at the heavens.

"Hearties all," quoth he, "the moon sinketh apace and 't will be ill shooting for 'em i' the dark, so with dark 't is us for the boats — muffled oars — we clap 'em aboard by the forechains larboard and starboard and the ship is ours, bullies — ours!"

"Well and good, Cap'n!" piped Smiling Sam. "But how if she slip her cable and stand from us — "

"And how shall she, my fool lad, and the wind dropped? The wind 's failed 'em, and they lie helpless — "

"And that 's gospel true, Cap'n. Aye, aye, we 'm wi' you! Gi'e us the word, Cap'n!" quoth divers voices in fierce answer.

"Oh, sink me!" groaned Mings. "Here lies poor Abnegation shattered alow and aloft. Oh, burn me, here 's luck! But you 'll take me along, Roger? If Death boards me to-night, I 'd rayther go in honest fight than lying here like a sick dog — so you 'll have me along, Roger?"

"Aye, that will I, lad, that will I and — "

"Ahoy the shore!" roared Godby's great voice again. "Let them rogue-dogs as 'll turn honest mariners, them as is for England and a free pardon, stand by to come aboard

and lively! In ten minute we open fire wi' every gun as bears!"

Now here there brake forth a clamour of oaths, cries and dismayed questioning:

"Lord love us, what now, Cap'n? Is us to be murdered, look'ee? Doomed men we be, lads! Shall us lie waiting to be shot, mates? What shall us do, Cap'n, what shall us do?"

"Lie low!" quoth Tressady, rising. "Bide still all and let no man stir till I give word. In half an hour or less 't will be black dark; very well, for half an hour I 'll hold 'em in parley. I 'll speak 'em smooth and mighty friendly; here shall be no shooting. I 'll hold 'em till the moon be down — and Smiler shall come wi' me — come, Sammy, lad — come!"

So saying, he turned and I watched him stride out upon that spit of sand hard by Bartlemy's tree and this great fat fellow trotting at his heels. Upon the edge of the tide Tressady paused and hailed loud and cheerily:

"Penfeather, ahoy! Oh, Adam Penfeather, here come I, Roger Tressady, for word wi' you. Look 'ee, Adam, we 've fought and run foul of each other this many a year — aye half round the world, and all for sake o' Black Bartlemy's Treasure as is mine by rights, Adam, mine by rights. Well now, to-night let 's you and me make an end once and for all, one way or t' other. There 's you wi' my ship — true, Adam, true! But here 's me wi' the island and the treasure, Adam, and the treasure. And what then? Why, then, says I, let 's you and me either come to some composition or fight it out man to man, Adam, man to man. So come ashore, Captain Penfeather — you as do be blacker pirate than ever was Bartlemy — come out yonder on the reef alone wi' me and end it one way or t' other. Come ashore, Adam, come ashore if ye dare adventure!"

"Ahoy you, Tressady!" roared Godby in reply. "Cap'n Adam is ashore wi' ye this moment — look astarn o' you, ye rogue!"

Round sprang Tressady as out from the dense shadow of Bartlemy's tree stepped Adam Penfeather himself. He stood there in the moonlight very still and viewing Tressady with head grimly outthrust, his arms crossed upon his breast, a pistol in either fist, and deadly menace in every line of his small, spare figure.

"I 'm here, Tressady!" said he, his voice ringing loud and clear. "And I am come to make an end o' you this night. It hath been long a-doing — but I have ye at last, Roger."

"Be ye sure, Adam, so sure?"

"As death, Tressady, for I have ye secure at last."

"Bleed me, but you 're out there, Adam, you 're out there. The boot 's on t' other leg, for hereabouts do lie thirty and eight o' my lads, watching of ye this moment and wi' finger on trigger."

"I know it!" said Adam, nodding. "But there 's never a one dare shoot me, for the first shot fired ashore shall bring a whole broadside in answer, d' ye see. But as for you, Tressady, pray if you can, for this hour you hang."

"Hang is it, Adam?" said Tressady, and with swift glance towards the sinking moon. "And who 's to do it — who?"

"There be thirty and eight shall swing ye aloft so soon as I give 'em the word, Tressady."

"You do talk rank folly, Adam, folly, and ye know it!" says he, smiling and stealing furtive hand to the dagger in his girdle. "But an I should die this night, I take you along wi' me, and you can lay to —" But he got no further, for Smiling Sam (and marvellous nimble) whipped up a stone and, leaping on him from behind, smote him two murderous blows and, staggering helplessly, Tressady pitched forward upon his face and lay upon the verge of the incoming tide.

Beholding his handiwork, Smiling Sam uttered a thin, high-shrilling laugh and spitting upon that still form kicked it viciously.

"Oho, Cap'n Penfeather," cried he, "'t is the Smiler hath save ye the labour, look 'ee! 'T is Sam hath finished Tressady at last and be damned t' him! And now 't is the Smiler as do be first to 'list wi' ye!" and he began to shamble across the sands. But passing that rock where crouched Abnegation Mings he tripped and fell, and I saw the flash of Abnegation's knife as they rolled and twisted in the shadow of this rock, whiles from this shadow rose a shrill crying like the wail of a hurt child, and into the moonlight came a great, fat hand that clutched and tore at the sand, then grew suddenly still and with crooked fingers plunged deep into the sand like a white claw. Then, tossing aside his bloody knife, Abnegation Mings struggled to his feet and came staggering to kneel above his comrade Tressady and to turn up the pallid face of him to the moon.

And now Adam thrust away his pistols and with hands clasped behind him turned to face the gloomy shadows of Skeleton Cove.

"Come out, sons o' dogs!" said he. "Step forward and show yourselves — and lively it is!" Ensued a moment's breathless pause, then, from bush and shadow and rocks, they stole forth these thirty and eight and, at Adam's harsh command, lined up before him shoulder and shoulder. "Well," asked Adam, pacing slowly along their rank to peer into every sullen, hang-dog face, "am I captain here? Aye or no?"

"Aye — aye!" they cried in eager chorus.

"And us was promised a free pardon, Cap'n!" quoth one.

"And a share of the treasure, Cap'n!" said another.

"And England, Cap'n!" cried a third. "There 's some on us as do be honest sailormen and forced to turn pirate in spite o' we — "

"Avast!" answered Adam. "What I promise I stand by. But mark this! Let any man fail of his duty to me but once, and I shoot that man or hang him out o' hand — is 't understood?"

"Aye, aye, Cap'n — 't is agreed! We 'll serve ye faithful and true," they cried.

"Why, then, bring ropes!" said Adam, and with his new 'listed men at his heels, goes whither lay Tressady and with Abnegation Mings yet crouched above him.

What now was doing I might not see by reason of the crowd, but I heard the voice of Mings upraised in fierce invective and the throng presently parting, beheld him trussed hand and foot and dragged along with Tressady towards Bartlemy's tree. There a noose was set about the neck of each, and the ropes' ends cast over a branch. But, as at Adam's command these miserable wretches were hauled aloft to their deaths, my lady uttered a cry of horror and grasped my arm in desperate hands.

"Martin!" she panted, "oh, Martin, 't is horrible! Save them; this must not — shall not be —"

"'T is but justice," said I, "these men are pirates and murderers — "

"This is no justice!" cried she breathlessly, her face all pale and drawn. "And these men are sore hurt beside — Ah, God — look! Stop them, Martin — Oh, stop them! Nay, then, I will!" And here, or ever I could let or stay her, she began to clamber down into the cove. Howbeit, quick and sure-footed though she was, I was presently before her and so came running, knife in hand. Nor was I any too soon, for as I reached the tree Tressady and Mings were dragged, choking, from their feet; but with a couple of strokes my keen knife had cut those deadly ropes asunder, and as the two fell gasping on the sand, I turned to stare into the scowling eyes of Adam Penfeather.

Now as I stood thus some one spoke 'twixt sigh and groan: "Bartlemy — 't is Bartlemy!" and the word was taken up by others, "Bartlemy — Black Bartlemy!" and all men drew back from me, whiles Adam scowled at me above levelled pistol.

"Hold off — Adam!" I panted. "Let be, Adam Penfeather — let be!"

"What?" cried he, peering. "And is it — Martin? Lord love me, now, what a fool's play is this?"

"What you will," quoth I, "only here has been enough of death for one night — "

"'T is but you do think so, Martin, and you was ever a fool! I came ashore to see these two rogues hang, and hang they shall!"

"Now look you, Adam Penfeather," said I, scowling, "you have cozened and tricked me since first you crossed my path; well, let that go! But mark this; according to your letter, three quarters of the treasure is mine. Very well — take it back — I 'll buy these rogues' lives of you — "

"Lord love me!" said he, staring in blank amaze, "what new fool craze is this? Will ye save this bloody murderer Tressady that drugged ye aboard ship, the man that was our bane and plague all along? The rogue hath been my deadliest enemy, seeking my destruction these fifteen years, and you would save him alive! It seemeth my pistol-butt must ha' harmed what little brain you have and you be run stark, staring mad, Martin!"

"Howbeit," said I, mighty determined, "you don't hang these men whiles I live!"

"Why, there 's no difficulty either, Martin, for what 's to stay me from hanging you along with 'em, or shooting you for the fool you are?"

"I!" cried a voice, and there betwixt us was my lady, she all stately dignity despite her hurried breathing, at sight of whom these lawless fellows gave back one and all, even Adam himself retreating a step, while he stared upon her round-eyed. Then, very slowly, he thrust pistols into belt and uncovering his head bowed full low, and I fancied his thin lips twitched as he did so.

"So be it, my lady," said he; "I call on your ladyship to witness that I sell two bundles of very unseemly merchandise," and he pointed towards the two helpless forms at his feet. "And now, with your fair leave, madam, I 'll see these fellows safe aboard and warn my Lord Dering and gentlemen of your welfare and presence here."

"Wait!" said I, as he turned to go. "First I would have these my purchases set aboard a boat with such stores needful and cast adrift."

"Why, this was not in the bargain, Martin!" said he, shaking his head. "But it shall be done for sake of our one-time comradeship." And away he went and his fellows with him. True to his word, he ordered the pinnace launched and sent divers men to bear these two rogues aboard. Hereupon I cut away their bonds; doing the which I found Tressady still unconscious, but Mings for all his wounds seemed lively enough.

"Master," said he, staring hard at me, "your name's Martin, as I think?"

"And what then?" said I, mighty short.

"'T is a name I shall mind as long as I do my own, and that is Mings — Abnegation Mings."

"Aye," answered I. "You told me this when you sang of dead men in a wood at midnight —"

"Ha, 't was you, was it, master! Well, here lieth poor Roger dead or dying and me little better, and 't is far to the Main and an ill journey, but should we come there and live, there be two men shall wonder at ye, master, nor ever forget the name o' the man as saved our necks. Howsoever, come life or death, here's Abnegation doth wish ye a fair wind ever and always, master."

So they bore him, together with Tressady, to the pinnace and, setting them aboard, shoved them adrift and I watched Abnegation ply feeble oars until the boat was through the passage in the reef and out in the open sea beyond.

Now as I stood thus, staring out to sea, the moon sank and with it my heart also, for as the dark came about me so came darkness within me and sudden sorrow with great fear of the future; wherefore, beholding the loom of the ship where lights twinkled, I would gladly have seen her a shattered wreck, and hearing the hoarse laughter and voices of these lawless fellows waking the echoes of Deliverance Beach, I hated them one and all and to my fear

and sorrow anger was added. But now cometh my dear lady to stand beside me, to steal her hand into mine, and never a word betwixt us for a while. At last—

"So endeth our solitude, Martin!"

"Aye!"

"Our deliverance is come!" said she and then, very softly. "Doth not this rejoice you?" Here answer found I none, since now at last I knew this the very thing I had come most to dread. So was silence again save for these hoarse, unlovely voices where they launched and boarded the long boat. "Master Adam would have me go on board, Martin, but 't is near dawn, so will I bide with you to welcome this new day."

"I 'm glad you stayed, Damaris." At this I felt her clasp tighten on my fingers and so she brought me to a rock hard by and, sinking on the warm sand, would have me sit by her; thus, side by side, we watched the boat pull away to the ship, and presently all about us was hushed save for the never-ceasing murmur of the surge.

"Martin," says she in a while, "with this new day beginneth for us a new life! In a few short hours we sail for England."

"England! Aye, to be sure!" said I, mighty doleful, but, conscious of her regard, strove to look happy yet made such a botch of it that, getting to her knees, she took my hang-dog face betwixt her two hands.

"Oh, but you are glad?" she questioned, a little breathlessly. "Glad to come with me to England — to leave this wilderness?"

"Aye!" I nodded, well-nigh choking on the word.

"Dear Martin, look at me!" she commanded. "Now speak me plain, whence is your grief?"

"Oh, my lady," quoth I, "'t is the knowledge of my unworthiness, my unloveliness, my rude and graceless ways; England is no place for like of me. I am well enough here in the wild — to work for you, fight for you an need be, but how may I compare with your fine gallants and courtly gentlemen —"

Now at this she clasped me all sudden in her arms and, setting soft cheek to mine, fell a-chiding me, yet kissing me full oft, calling me "silly," "dear," "foolish," and "beloved."

"How shall you compare?" cried she. "Thus and thus, dear Martin — so infinitely above and beyond all other men that unless you wed me needs must I die a maid!"

Thus did she comfort me, soothing my fears, and thus the dawn found us.

"Oh, 't is day!" she sighed. "'T is day already!" And now 't was her voice was doleful, whiles her eyes gazed regretful round about the white sands of Deliverance and the tree-clad highlands beyond. "Oh, indeed I do love this dear island of ours, Martin!"

Sudden upon the stilly air was the beat of oars, and we beheld a boat rowed by a couple of mariners, and in the stern-sheets Sir Rupert Dering and the three gentlemen, his companions. Hereupon my lady would have me go with her to meet them then and there, but I shook my head.

"Do you go, Damaris; I 'll not speak them before I must. And should you have cause to mention me, I pray you will not tell my name."

"As you will, dear Martin," said she and, pressing my hand, went her way. From the shadow of the rock I watched these gentlemen leap gaily ashore to bow before her with many and divers elegant posturings, flourishes and flauntings of hats, kissings of her hand and the like gallantries, until I must needs scowl otherwhere; yet even so, was conscious of their merry laughter where they paced to and fro and the new-risen sun making a glory about her. At last she curtseyed and staying them with a gesture, came hasting back to me.

"Martin," said she, "it seems there be men wounded and dying on board ship; so must I go to them. Will you not come with me?"

"Nay," I answered. "I 'll to the caves for such things as you would bring away."

"Why, then, my spoon, Martin, and three-legged stool; bring these; nay wait, 't is there I would bid farewell to this our dear island. Wait me there, Martin!"

So away she went upon her errand of mercy, leaving me to my thoughts, and these all of England and my future life there. I was fain to picture myself married and happy in my lady's love, my life thenceforth a succession of peaceful days amid the ordered quiet of that Kentish countryside I knew and loved so well. With the eye of my mind I seemed to see a road winding 'twixt bloomy hedgerows, past chattering brooks and pleasant meadows, past sleepy hamlet bowered 'mid trees and so, 'neath a leafy shade, to where rose tall gates, their pillars crowned by couchant leopards wrought in the stone, and beyond these a broad avenue, its green shadow splashed with sunlight, leading away to the house of Conisby Shene with its wide terrace, where stood my lady waiting and expectant; yet nowhere could I vision myself. And now I must needs bethink me of Godby's "long, dark road with the beckoning light and the waiting arms of love," and in my heart the old doubt waked and a fear that such peace, such tender meetings and welcomes sweet were not for such as I, nor ever could be.

From these gloomy reflections I was roused by a giggling laugh and, glancing about, espied Sir Rupert and his three fellows, their finery somewhat the worse for their late hardship yet themselves very gay and debonair none the less as they stood viewing me and mighty interested. Presently Sir Rupert steps up to me with his haughtiest fine-gentlemanly air and no civility of bowing.

"Let me perish but here's notable change!" said he, surveying my rich attire, so that I yearned for my rags again. "Here is strange metamorphosis! The sullen and rustic Cymon bloometh at Beauty's mandate; Caliban is tamed!" At the which sally his companions giggled again.

"Sir," quoth I, and awkwardly enough, "I am in no mood for your pleasantries; if therefore you have aught

else to say of me, pray remove out o' my hearing." This protest Sir Rupert fanned airily aside with be-ringed hand.

"I gather," said he, "that you have been at some pains of service to my Lady Brandon in her late dolorous situation here — receive my thanks!"

"I wish none o' your thanks, sir —"

"None the less I bestow 'em — on my Lady Brandon's behalf. Furthermore —"

"Enough sir, I would be alone —"

"Furthermore," he continued and with another airy motion of his white fingers, "I would have you particularly remark that if my Lady Brandon, lacking better company, hath stooped to any small familiarities with you, these must be forgot and —"

"Ha!" I cried, springing to my feet, "begone, paltry fool, lest I kick you harder than I did last time at Conisby Shene —"

"Insolent gallow's-rogue!" he panted, reaching for his sword-hilt, but as he freed it from scabbard I closed with him and, wrenching it from his hold, belaboured him soundly with the flat of it and such of his companions as chanced within my reach, until, hearing shouts, I espied Adam approaching with divers of his grinning fellows. Whereupon I snapped the blade across my knee and hasted from the place.

I strode on haphazard in a blind fury, but reaching the woods at last and safe from all observation, I cast myself down therein, and gradually my anger grew to a great bitterness. For (thinks I) "gallow's-rogue" am I in very truth and outcast from my kind, a creature shamed by pillory and lash, a poor wretch for spiteful Fortune's buffets. Hereupon (being a blind fool ever) I cursed the world and all men in it saving only my unworthy self. And next, bethinking me of my dear lady who of her infinite mercy had stooped to love such as I, it seemed that my shame must smirch her also, that rather than lifting me to her level I must needs drag her down to mine. She, wedding me, gave all, whiles I, taking all, had nought

to offer in return save my unworthiness. Verily it seemed that my hopes of life with her in England were but empty dreams, that I had been living in the very Paradise of Fools unless —

Here I raised bowed head and clenching my fists stared blindly before me:

How if the ship should sail without us?

CHAPTER XXXV

I Lose My Lady

The sun being high-risen and myself famished with hunger, I set off for our habitation by paths well-hid from observation and yearning mightily to find my lady there. Having scaled the cliff, I reached the little plateau and, parting the bushes, recoiled from the muzzle of a piece levelled at me by a squat, grim fellow.

"What, Godby!" said I, frowning. "D' ye take me for murderer still, then?" At this he let fall his musket in blank amaze and then came running and with hands outstretched.

"Oh, pal!" cried he, "oh, pal — have I found ye at last? Ha, many 's the time I 've grieved for ye and my fool's doubts o' you, Martin, choke me else! I 'm sorry, pal, burn me but I 've repented my suspecting o' you ever since, though to be sure you was mighty strange aboard the *Faithfull Friend* and small wonder. But here 's me full o' repentance, Martin, so — if you can forgive poor Godby — ?"

"Full and freely!" said I, whereupon he hugs me and the tears running down his sunburned cheeks.

"Then we 'm pals again, Martin, and all 's bowmon!"

"And what o' me?" Turning about, I beheld Adam on the threshold of the cave. "What o' me, shipmate?"

"Aye — what?" repeated I, folding my arms.

"Ha, doth the tap o' my pistol-butt smart yet, Martin — ?"

"I know you beyond all doubt for pirate and buccaneer — "

"All past and done, Martin."

"I know you planned from the first to seize the *Faithfull Friend*—"

"Aye, but where's your proof? The *Faithfull Friend* is blown up—"

"And by your hand, like as not—"

"True again, so it was, Martin; and thereby did I outwit Tressady and saved the lives of my own people."

"You have been at great pains to befool me to your evil ends."

"At no pains, Martin; 't was purely simple matter!"

"You have been the death of divers men on this island."

"But always in fair fight!" said he, glancing at me in his furtive fashion. "'T was them or me, comrade, and black rogues all."

"So you say!"

"And who's to deny it, shipmate?"

"Aye, who indeed? It seems you've killed 'em all."

"Ha, d'ye doubt my word, Martin?"

"Aye, I do so, and judging from what I know, I do take ye for a very rogue, and so I'm done with you henceforth."

"Rogue?" says he. "'T is an ill word! And yet I had rather be rogue than fool, and you are the fool of the world, Martin, for here are you seeking quarrel with your best friend."

"Friend?" quoth I. "O God, protect me from such!"

"Now look 'ee, you have named me rogue and good as called me liar, which is great folly, seeing you do lie in my power. So here will I prove my friendship and the depth of your folly—"

"Nay—I'll hear no more!"

"Aye—but you will! Cover him, Godby, and fire if I say so!"

"Oh, Lord love me!" groaned Godby, but obeyed nevertheless, and looking where he stood, his piece levelled at me, I knew he would obey Adam's word despite his anguished looks.

"And now," said Adam, crossing his arms, "here's the truth on 't. I found you a poor wretch bent on vengeance,

murder, and a rogue's death, which was pure folly. I offered you riches, the which you refused, and this was arrant folly. I took you for comrade, brought you aboard ship with offer of honest employ which you likewise refused, and here was more folly. Your conduct on board ship was all folly. So, despite yourself, I set you on a fair island with a right noble and handsome lady that you, by love, might perchance learn some little wisdom. Well, you fall in love—"

"Stop!" cried I, clenching my fists.

"Not I!" said he, uncrossing his arms, and I saw he had levelled a pistol at me in the crook of his arm. "I'm no fine gentlemen for ye to bruise, so haul your wind and listen! You fall in love with my lady, as how could you help, and she with you, which is a matter of some wonder. So here are you full o' love, but doth this teach ye wisdom? Never a whit! For now must you fall foul and belabour our four gallants and from mere fine gentlemen transform 'em into your deadly enemies, and here was folly stupendous! And now you must quarrel with me, the which is folly absolute! Thus do I find ye fool persistent and consistent ever, and I, being so infinitely the opposite, do contemn you therefor—"

"And now ha' you done?" I demanded, raging.

"Not quite, Martin. You balked me i' the hanging o' these two rogues, Tressady and Mings, and here was pitiful folly, since to hang such were a wise and prudent measure. Thus have you loosed murder on my heels again; well, let that go. But you doubted my word, you named me rogue and for this you shall fight me!" So saying, he stepped into the cave and brought thence that same bejewelled Spanish rapier."

"I've no mind to fight with you," said I, turning away.

"An excellent blade!" said he, making a pass in the air; then he tendered it to me hilt foremost and with a little bow.

"'T is right you should know I am wearing the chain shirt."

"No matter," quoth he, drawing, "there is your throat or your eye — come!"

So point to point we fell to it. I had been somewhat esteemed at the art once, and now I matched his vicious thrusts with cunning parades, with volts and passes, pushing at him when I might so that twice I was very near. But suddenly as he retreated before my attack, his blade darted and flashed, and he called out: "One!" And now he pressed me in turn with quick thrusts and bewildering feints and presently called out again: "Two! Three! Four!" Then I saw he was cutting the buttons from my sleeve, how and when he would; therefore I cast away my sword in petulant anger and folded my arms.

"Lord love me! Are ye done, Martin?"

"Oh, make an end one way or t' other; I'll not be played with!"

"Verily, you were more dangerous with a club!" said he and sheathed his rapier. As for me, espying the three-legged stool, I sat me down mighty dejected and full of bitter thoughts, until, feeling a touch on my bowed shoulder, I looked up and found him beside me.

"Martin," said he, "'t is true you are a fool, but your folly harmeth none but yourself! And thou 'rt such honest fool that I must needs love thee, which is strange, yet so it is. Look 'ee, we have quarrelled and fought, very well — what 's to let us from being friends again?"

"But if I doubt you, Adam?"

"Why, as to that," said he with his whimsical look, "I verily do think myself a something doubtful being at times."

Now at this, up I rose and gripped his hand right heartily; which done he brought me into the cave whiles Godby posted himself on the threshold, leaning on his musket.

"What now, Adam?" I questioned.

"Now let us divide our treasure, Martin —"

"But I bartered my share for the lives of —"

"Tush!" said he, and reaching a valise from shadowy

corner he opened it and I beheld such a glory of flashing gems as nigh dazzled me with their splendour. "Look at 'em, Martin, look at 'em!" he whispered. "Here's love and hate, life and death, every good and all the sins — look at 'em!" And catching up a handful he let them fall, glittering, through his fingers. "Lord love me, Martin," he whispered; "'t is enough to turn a man's brain! Have ye counted 'em over, comrade?"

"I never saw them until this moment, Adam." And I confessed how in my folly I had cast his letter of instructions into the sea, and of how my lady had found the secret at her dire peril.

"And she never showed you, Martin?"

"I was always too busy!"

"Busy!" cried he, sitting back on his heels to stare up at me. "Busy? Oh, Lord love me! Sure there's not your like i' the whole world, Martin!"

"Which is mighty well for the world!" said I bitterly.

"'T is vasty treasure, Martin, and worth some little risk. And in the cave lie yet fifty and four bars of gold and others of silver with store of rix-dollars, doubloons, moidores and pieces of eight — gold coins of all countries. There let 'em rot; here's more wealth than we shall ever spend. Shall we divide it here or aboard ship?"

"Wait rather until we reach England."

"So be it, comrade. Then I'm minded to apportion a share to Godby here. What d' ye say?"

"With all my heart!"

"Why, then, 't is time we got it safe on board."

"But how to do it — what of Tressady's rogues, Adam?"

"Having buried such of themselves as needed it, Martin, you shall see 'em playing leapfrog on the sands down yonder, happy as any innocent school lads, and never a firearm amongst 'em."

"Hist, Cap'n!" warned Godby, suddenly alert, "the man Abner and his two mates a-peeping and a-prying!"

"Where away, Godby, man?"

"Hove to in the lee o' them bushes yonder."

"'T is sly, skulking rogue, this Abner!" said Adam, closing and strapping the valise. "'T is in my mind, Godby, this Abner will never live to see England. Summon 'em hither, all three."

This Godby did forthwith, and presently the three fellows appeared who, knuckling their foreheads, made us their several reverences.

"What now, lads?" said Adam, viewing them with his keen eyes. "I seem to mind your looks; you sailed with Black Bartlemy aboard the *Delight*, I think? Nay, 't is no matter, we 'll let bygones be bygones and we be all marvellous honest these days, the which is well. Meantime take this dunnage down to the boat," and he pointed to the valise. Hereupon one of the fellows took it up, and knuckled an eyebrow to us in turn. "We sail at sundown," said Adam, "so, Godby, you may as well go aboard and see that all be ready."

"Aye, aye!" said Godby, tightening the belt where swung his great cutlass and, shouldering his musket, set off after the three.

"So there goeth our fortune aboard, comrade."

"And in desperate, risky fashion, Adam —"

"In safe, straightforward fashion rather, and in broad daylight, the which is surer than stealing it aboard in the dark —"

"But should these rogues guess what they carry —"

"They won't, Martin, and if they should they have but their knives 'gainst Godby's musket and pistols —"

"Ha — murder, Adam?"

"Would you call this murder, comrade?"

"What other? I wonder what manner of man you 'll be away there in England?"

"A worthy, right worshipful justice o' the peace, Martin, if Providence seeth fit, in laced coat and great peruke, to see that my tenant's cottages be sound and wholesome, to pat the tousled heads o' the children, bless 'em! And to have word with every soul i' the village. To

snooze in my great pew o' Sundays and, dying at last, snug abed, to leave behind me a kindly memory. And what for you, Martin? What see you in the ship yonder?"

"God knoweth!" said I gloomily.

"Why not a woman's love, comrade; why not good works, rank and belike — children to honour your memory?"

"Were I but worthy all this, Adam?"

"Zounds, but here's humility! Yet your true lover is ever humble, I've heard, so 't is very well, Martin. And this doth mind me I bear you a message from my lady —"

"A message — from her?" I cried, gripping his arm. "Out with it, man, out with it, and God forgive you this delay! What said my lady?"

"This, Martin: she would have you shave according to late custom —"

"Why, so I will! But said she no more?"

"Aye, something of meeting you here. So get to your shaving and cheerily, comrade, cheerily. I'll to the ship, for at sunset 't is up anchor and hey for England! I'll fire two guns to warn you aboard, and tarry not, for the ship lieth within a sunken reef and we must catch the flood." Here he turned to go, then paused to glance round the horizon with a seaman's eye. "The wind is fair to serve us, Martin," said he, pinching his chin, "and yet I could wish for a tempest out o' the north and a rising sea!"

"And why, Adam, in Heaven's name?"

"'T would be the sure and certain end of Tressady and Mings, comrade. Howbeit, what 's done is done, and all things do lie in the hands of Providence, so do I cherish hope. Go and shave, Martin, go and shave!"

Left alone, I betook me to my razors and shaved me with unwonted care, yet hearkening for her quick, light step the while.

Scarce was my labour ended than I thought to hear the rustle of leaves and hasted from the cave, calling on her name and mighty joyous and eager:

"Damaris! Art here at last, dear, my lady?" And so came face to face with Sir Rupert.

He stood smiling at my discomfiture, yet his black brows were close; but he halted and folded his arms, and I could see the betraying bulge of the pistol in his great side pocket. For a while he measured me with his eye; at last he spoke:

"Within the hour my Lady Brandon sails for England, and from this hour you will forget my Lady Brandon ever existed or—"

"Tush, man!" said I. "Begone, you weary me—"

"Or," he went on with an airy gesture of his hand, "I shall cure your weariness for good—"

"Shoot me?"

"Most joyfully! Whatsoever hath chanced betwixt you in this wilderness, my Lady Brandon's honour must and—"

Warned by my look, he clapped hand to his pocket but as he freed the weapon I was upon him, grasping his pistol hand. For a moment we swayed together, he striving frantically to break my hold, I to wrest it from him, then it exploded and, uttering a sudden, long-drawn gasp, he sank to the grass at my feet and lay very mute and still. Whilst I yet stared from his pallid face to the pistol where it had fallen, I heard shouts, a running of feet, and glancing up saw the three gentlemen, his companions, standing at gaze, motionless; then suddenly they turned and hasted away, crying "Murder" on me as they ran. Like one in a dream I stared down at Sir Rupert's motionless form until I was aware of my lady beside him on her knees and of the pallor of her face as she looked from him to me, her eyes wide with horror.

"If you have killed him, Martin—if you have killed him, here is an end of our happiness—God forgive you!"

Now would I have spoken but found no words, for in this moment I knew that Sir Rupert was surely dead. Dumbly I watched the passionate labour of her dexterous hands, saw them pause at last to clasp and wring them-

selves in helpless despair, saw the three gentlemen, obedient to her word, stoop and lift that limp form and bear it slowly away towards Deliverance Sands and she going beside them.

Now as I stood watching her leave me, I heard the sudden roar of a gun and, glancing towards the ship, saw they were already making sail. Roused by this I came beside my lady and found my voice at last.

"Here was the work of chance—not I, Damaris, not I!"

But she, gazing ever on that piteous, limp form, sought to silence me with a gesture. "God, Damaris, you 'll never doubt my word? Speak—will you not speak to me? He threatened me—we strove together and the pistol went off in his grasp—"

"Damned murderer!" cried one of the gentlemen.

After this I held my peace, despairing, and thus we went in silence until before us was Deliverance Beach. All at once I caught her up in my arms and, despite her struggles, began to bear her back up the ascent. For a moment only she strove, uttering no word, then, hiding her face against me, suffered me to bear her where I would. But now I heard shouts and cries that told me I was pursued.

"You are mine, Damaris!" I cried. "Mine henceforth, and no man shall take you from me whiles I live!"

Despite my haste the noise of pursuit waxed louder, spurring me to greater effort. And now it became the end and aim of my existence to reach the cave in time, wherefore I began to run, on and up, until my breath came in great, panting sobs; my heart seemed bursting and in my throbbing brain a confusion of wild thoughts:

"Better die thus, my love, upon my heart—this ship shall sail without us—the door of the cave is stout, God be thanked and, firing from the loophole, I may withstand them all—"

Breathless and reeling, I gained the plateau at last, but as I staggered towards the cave I tripped and fell heavily, crushing her beneath me. But I struggled up and, bear-

ing her within the cave, laid her upon my bed and, closing the door, barred it; then I reached my muskets from their rack and set them in readiness. This done and finding my lady so still and silent, I came to view her where she lay and, peering in the dimness, uttered a great cry to see the pale oval of her cheek horribly bedabbled with blood. Trembling in a sickness of fear I sank beside her on my knees, then, seeing she yet breathed, I parted the silky hair above her temple and so came on a cruel gash. Now as I strove to staunch this precious blood I heard again the echoing thunder of a gun.

"Damaris!" said I, clasping her to me and kissing her pallid lips. "Oh, Damaris, they are summoning us to England, d' ye hear, beloved, d' ye hear? Well, they shall call in vain; they shall sail without us. Love hath found us and here with Love will we abide— Wake, beloved, wake and tell me you would have it so!"

But, save for her breathing, and despite all my pleading and caresses, she lay like one dead. So I brought water and bathed her face and throat and wrists, yet all to no purpose, so that fear grew to agony. How if she die thus (thinks I)? Why, then, I can die likewise. But again, how if she wake and, finding the ship gone, despise me and, in place of her lover, look on me as her gaoler? For a while I crouched there, my head bowed on my fists, since well I knew that England might shelter me nevermore. And yet to part with her that was become my very life—

As I knelt thus, in an agony of indecision, was sudden tumult of knocking upon the door and the sound of fierce voices:

"Come forth, murderer! Open to us, rogue—open!"

But still I knelt there, heeding only the hurry of my thoughts:

"How if the ship sail without us? How if she wake and know me for her gaoler? How might I endure loneliness? How part with her that was become my life? Belike she might not hate me—"

"Open, murderer, open!" roared the voices.

"A murderer! How if she believe this? Better loneliness and death than to read horror of me in her every look!"

And now beyond the door was silence, and then I heard Adam hailing me:

"Oho, shipmate — unbar! Tide's on the turn, and we must aboard. And trust me, Martin, for your comrade as will see justice done ye. So come, Martin, you and my lady and let's aboard!"

"Aye, aye, Adam!" quoth I. "Better die o' solitude than live with a breaking heart. So cheerily it is, Adam!"

Then rising, I took my dear lady in my arms and, holding her against my heart, I kissed her hair, her closed eyes, her pale, unresponsive lips and bearing her to the door contrived to open it and stepped forth of the cave. And here I found Adam, pistol in hand, with divers of his fellows and the three gentlemen who scowled amain, yet, eyeing Adam's weapon, did no more than clench their fists and mutter of gibbets and the like.

"Look you, Adam," said I, "my lady is stunned of a fall, but 't will be no great matter once we come aboard — let us go."

"Why then, Lord love you, Martin — hasten!" said he, "for tide's falling, and it's all we shall do to clear the reef."

Reaching Deliverance Sands I saw the boat already launched and manned and, wading into the water, laid my lady in the stern sheets.

"Come!" cried Adam, reaching me his hand. "In with ye, man —"

"Not I, Adam."

"Why, what now, comrade?" said he, staring.

"Now — my hand, Adam, and a prosperous voyage to you!"

"How, comrade, will ye stay marooned in this desolation?" and he stooped to peer down at me. "Martin," said he, gripping my hand and staring into my eyes,

"doth this mean you are safer here by reason of the mystery of Sir Rupert's sudden end?"

"Mayhap!" said I and loosed his hand. "What think you?"

"That you are no murderer, comrade, nor ever will be!"

"My lady said as much once! Farewell, Adam!" And I waded back to the beach.

"Give way, lads!" cried he. "Give way!" I heard the splash and beat of their oars and when I turned to look I saw them halfway across the lagoon.

Then I turned and wandered aimlessly along these white sands that had known so often the light tread of her pretty feet. Very slowly I went with eyes that saw not, ears that heard not and my mind a confusion of bitter thoughts.

At last I reached the little plateau and from this eminence beheld the ship standing away under a press of sail and saw that night was at hand. Suddenly as I watched, the ship, her lofty masts and gleaming canvas swam all blurred and misty on my sight and, sinking to my knees, I bowed my head.

"Almighty God!" said I. "Thou hast shown unto me the wonder of love and the heaven it might have been, but since love is not for me, teach me how I may be avenged—"

But now, even as I prayed thus, my voice brake upon a great sob, insomuch that I might pray no more. Therefore I cast myself upon my face, forgetting all things but my great and bitter lonéliness.

And so came night and shut me in.

Here then I make an end of this narrative of Black Bartlemy's Treasure, but how and in what manner I came to my vengeance is yet to tell.

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